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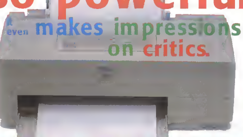

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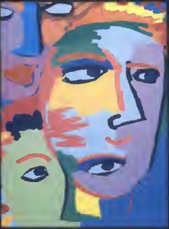

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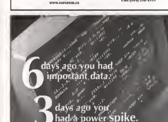
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The Answer in Power Protection

57,000 channels and nothing on

As television broadcasters are pushing the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission to allow more TV channels into Canada, software developers are busy trying to make the World Wide Web into a broadcast medium. A new trend has invaded the Internet—again. Products like PointCast, Marimba's Castanet, Intermind's Communicator, Berkeley Systems' After Dark Online and AirMedia's NewsCatcher are all pushing the envelope of how we get our information from the Web.

E mail lacks emphasis

Currently on the Internet, most users are focused on e-mail and the Web. With mailing lists and newsgroups, e-mail can be used to broadcast information, but because e-mail standards vary, you are often limited to the lowest common denominator—straight ASCII text. I am probably not the only user who has stopped reading mail from a mailing list that I subscribed to because the messages all look the same—I can't spot the highlights in unformatted text.

Things are changing with e-mail. Netscape now has Inbox Direct, which has the ability to send formatted mail and Web pages. Still, many people hold out from using the e-mail in their browsers and use other programs that have yet to support these rich text formats.

The Web is passive

The World Wide Web does offer a standard way of presenting information in a wide array of formatted text, sound, graphic and animations. Practically speaking however, the Web has, for most of its short life, been primarily a passive method of distributing information. Before you Java fans chew me out, I didn't say non-interactive, I said passive. By that, I mean Web surfers have to visit a site to get the information. At the same time, companies or organizations with sites on the Web have to wait for surfers to come and see their information. Users tend to visit many sites regularly, but they will miss what is happening altogether on the vast majority of sites that don't happen to be among their frequently visited destinations.

PointCast points the way

The first company out of the starting blocks to offer a solution to this problem was PointCast. The solution it came up with was to create a broadcasting system that sent regular updates of information to your computer. It combined the formatting of the Web with the targeting of information of an e-mail mailing list. Your computer would then present these information updates on your screen in a screen-saver format. Because it is advertising supported, it is being used primarily by large Web publishers, so if you want updates from some small site, you are unlikely to get it on PointCast. It has recently launched an intranet version of this product for in-house corporate broadcasting of information.

Graphic from http://www.pointcast.com

Java is the answer

One well-hyped company entering this field is Marimba. The people launching this company are members of Sun Microsystems' original Java development team. Marimba's product is called Castanet. Touted by *Wired* magazine as the next Netscape, its twist on this is to do the receiver application in Java and to create a "sandbox" on a user's hard drive onto which software, animations, sound, etc., will be downloaded. Marimba's goal seems to be to avoid the limitations of straight hypertext markup language (HTML), and offer the ability to download to a user's hard drive things like regular software updates, videos and other complex data types.

Intermind's Communicator

Intermind's claim to fame seems to be a free broadcaster for small not-for-profit sites. This is a good strategy because if it can get a groundswell of sites using it and get users to install it in their browser software, then it can charge larger companies some decent coin for using the technology. The company has a plan for seat-based pricing for intranets and custom pricing for large sites. Another twist Intermind offers—that should appeal to users—is that the information publishers can get is limited. Online publishers can get an idea of how many people are accessing their information and get aggregate data, but cannot single out users to track. This will appeal to many users and some publishers.

Standards battle

In the past we have seen that in an area that lacks standards, it is the company that gets its product out in the most widespread use that often wins—or at least until Microsoft shows up to absorb the product category in its operating system—something that Internet Explorer 4.0 promises to do when it is released in early 1997. Based on early previews, it looks as though IE4 will bring 'active news' to the Windows desktop and integrate the Web seamlessly with local content. Not to be outdone, IBM is reportedly planning to integrate Warp with Netscape Navigator's browser interface in a future release!

Eventually, this area will settle down and a standard way to do broadcast will emerge. Who the big winner will be remains to be seen. From my view, the Intermind Communicator holds the most interesting promise because of its approach to privacy. If it really can deliver the goods and provide a layer of privacy to the user, it will have achieved the best of both worlds. The pricing scheme also seems to be attracting smaller Web publishers. In the long run, however, all these great ideas may get steamrollered by the Microsoft machine.

If Statistics Canada is correct that less than 10 percent of Canadian households currently log onto the Internet, it will be a while before the Web replaces TV, but it is nice to see that our information options continue to flourish.

Enjoy the issue.

Douglas Alder
Editor/Publisher

Sources and Sites:
http://www.pointcast.com
http://www.marimba.com
http://www.intermind.com
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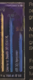

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They got gloves too, and they're Canajun

Dr Eberbach's gloves ["Gloves designed to relieve carpal tunnel strain," TCP Nov 96] while a welcome addition to the arsenal in the fight against RSI [repetitive strain injury] are neither new nor unique. Handwel support gloves, designed and manufactured by our company here in Toronto introduced the concept of controlling the pressure-buildup in the carpal tunnel by providing stress-reducing flexible support and distribution over the whole affected hand and wrist area tunnel (akin to wearing snowshoes) two years ago.

Handwel gloves allow wearers to retain virtually full use of their hands. They travel seamlessly from activity to activity and have become well accepted in many applications, from computer use to fish processing, to music schools to crafts.

We also have a Web site dedicated to RSI prevention at http://www.io.org/ paltron/handwel/

Your readers are welcome to visit us there.

Laura Covey, Paltron Industries, Tel 416-787-1325

Speaking of wrists

Has *The Computer Paper* done a recent comparison of ergonomic keyboards? I am interested in finding a keyboard that can be divided. I want each hand to have a separate piece of keyboard for maximum flexibility in positioning and comfort.

Bruce Pilcher, via Internet

DT replies: We haven't conducted a survey specifically comparing ergonomic keyboards in a lab setting, but we've looked at a number of design variations over the past few years. See "Different Strokes, alternative input devices" in our May 1995 issue (also available on our Web site www.tcp.ca).

One design by Ergologic hinges the two halves of the keyboard at the ends and allows the halves to be raised upward from the centre (where the G-H keys are located) like a tent. Unfortunately we have not been able to get in touch with the company. The 800 number no longer works and directory assistance in Fremont, Calif. no longer has a listing for the company. We also tried to contact Ergologic in Vancouver (the keyboard was designed at the University of British Columbia) but the number is not in service. Alberta-based Ergonomic Solutions (Tel. 800-660-3746) says it still has a few models left in its warehouse, at $362 each.

PerfecTouch Inc. in Chicago (Tel. 800-859-2225) has a model called the PerfecTouch 101 that has a knob at the top of the keyboard unit. The two halves can be moved apart, or—if the knob is removed—separated completely. It sells for US$109. You might also find this model marketed under the Lexmark brand.

The Health Care Keyboard Company (Tel. 414-536-2160) makes the Comfort Keyboard System. This keyboard has three adjustable sections: left-hand, right-hand and numeric keypad, and costs US$795.

If you have access to an Internet account, search on keywords such as "Ergonomic+keyboards" and you'll find other designs as well.

An inkjet is an inkjet is an inkjet

The November Lab Test article on inkjet printers mentions three main types of inks in use by these printer types. The three types I refer to are thermal, piezo and solid inkjets. Yet in the chart at the end of the article comparing features shows a fourth type. My question: what is a bubble jet? Is that one of the above or an entirely new type?

Ken Silverman, via Internet

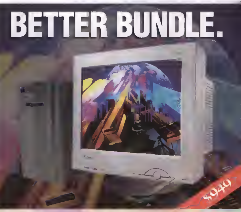
GB replies: In fact, bubble-jet technology was a happy accident. In a Canon research and development lab in the 1970s, a researcher accidentally placed the hot tip of a soldering iron against an ink filled syringe. To his amazement, a jet of ink was expelled when an air bubble formed in the ink tank. After considerable research, the technology found its way into Canon's line of printers, fax machines, copiers, calculator—even a Canon notebook computer with a built in color Bubble Jet printer. Canon says it holds more than 8,500 patents on Bubble Jet technology. Thus "Bubble Jet" is simply the Canon trademark name for a thermal ink dispersal print mechanism. (For more info, see http://www.ccsi.canon.com/aboutccsi/bjbackground.html)

Begs to differ on Zip

I was reading the review of various backup methods and devices in the October issue of *The Computer Paper* when I noticed some inaccuracies in the article regarding the Iomega Zip 100 drive. First, the author wrote that "The Iomega looks suspiciously like the SyQuest."

However, it should be noted that the Iomega Zip Drive has been on the market far longer than the EZ Flyer 230, and that the EZ 135 looks nothing like the Zip. Although not technically incorrect, the phrase gives the impression that the Iomega drive copied the SyQuest design, when in fact it was probably the other way around.

Next, the author states that "the Zip 100 is a much more flimsy feeling unit with similarly anemic cartridges."



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Technical Comparison
Optiquest V775 and other 17" (various viewables) monitors

	Optiquest V775	NEC XV17+	MAG DX1795	Samsung 17GLi
Actual Viewable Size	16.0"	15.6"	16.1"	15.6"
Dot Pitch	0.26mm	0.28mm	0.26mm	0.28mm
Horizontal Frequency	24-82KHz	31-65KHz	30-85KHz	30-65KHz
Bandwidth	135MHz	85MHz	100MHz	110MHz
1,280 x 1,024 @ 76Hz	Yes	No	No	No
1,024 x 768 @ 86Hz	Yes	No	No	No
CRT Warranty	3 Years	3 Years	2 Years	3 Years
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Optiquest V775 Performance

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Optiquest Value

Optiquest monitors exceed energy certification and emission standards including VESA® DPMS™ and MPR II and offer *Plug & Play+* for compatibility with Windows® 95.

However, the author did not mention that although the SyQuest cartridges do appear to be more substantial they are indeed more delicate than the Zip cartridges Similarly the SyQuest drives are more delicate than their Zip cousins I own an Iomega Zip and regularly use the SyQuest drives (SQ 270 EZ 135 EZ 230) on other machines I ve dropped Zip cartridges from desk height without major problems on many occasions, whereas the SyQuest cartridges were quite badly damaged when subjected to the same falls I have dropped my Zip drive on the floor from the same height, and it still works without a problem I ve seen the results of a dropped SyQuest drive and it's not pretty

Aside from these minor inaccuracies I enjoyed your article and was glad to see some of the caveats of the various drives listed.

Regards B Hum via Internet

One phone line, one more option

Your article on home phone/fax options "One phone line so many devices, (*TCP* Oct '96) left out the most obvious choice, a voice modem I have a voice modem at home running WinFax Pro 7 0 and Talkworks software all on ONE phone line The software allows me to receive voice messages fax messages as well as data communications If you have a small office you can even set up 100 mailboxes which can receive both voice and fax messages I have the software set up to "listen in" on incoming calls If a fax or data tone is detected the software takes over and handles the call If I pick up and hear the fax tone I simply hang-up I have multiple phones plugged into multiple outlets I don't need everything close together. I ve been using this setup for over six months without a hiccup.

Keith Gossen The Netherlands (Soon to be back in the Homeland of Canada)

DT replies Our hardware reviewer found yet another option—he installed a second phone line

This kind of help I don't need

This letter doesn t really have to do with any recent articles that I ve read in *The Computer Paper* This just seemed like the best spot to air my dissatisfaction when I set out on that long and lonely road of trying to upgrade my lowly 486

I thought I had planned well about a year and a half ago when I upgraded my motherboard and my RAM and kept my DX-33 processor and ISA video card My first purchase after that (a VLB EIDE card) was also my first discovery that I had been misled

When buying the new motherboard I was told that I should buy a VESA local bus. I later discovered that I should have bought a PCI motherboard for a few dollars more

Oh well, I decided that I would live with my mistake and continue to upgrade with my present motherboard. I then upgraded the video card and added a modem sound card and 6x CD ROM drive.

After a time I decided to proceed with the long-anticipated processor upgrade At this point I discovered that my motherboard and its manual did not display the manufacturer's name I then called the vendor I had purchased it from and was basically given the brush off unless I wanted to purchase a new motherboard. I contacted other local computer stores with similar treatment At this point in time I was feeling very disillusioned but discovered after an Internet search that I owned an F I C. (First International Computer) motherboard and the company was the third largest manufacturer and distributor of motherboards in the world

Happy in my newfound knowledge I then proceeded to attempt to locate a local distributor. Once again no one seemed interested in helping upgrade my motherboard unless it was a new one purchased from them Fortunately I did find one local dealer that was willing to help me do an upgrade on my existing motherboard I now have a new BIOS and an AMD 5X86-133 processor running in my computer. My point is that computer upgrades are made a lot harder by those computer dealers that should be helping, but won't unless you make a major purchase from them Thanks for letting me get this off my chest.

Don Bowman, via Internet

How many drives on EIDE?

I have a question that the computer sales people I have asked can't answer My computer BIOS says it supports four hard drives. I now use an IDE card with two hard drives If I get an EIDE card would a new hard drive and a new CD ROM drive work together with the old hard drive? I suppose a EIDE card supports four drives, am I right? Thanks for the great paper

Thomas Lee via Internet

SH replies. Yes, an EIDE connection has support for four drives altogether You can mix and match hard drives with CD-ROM drives In your case you would probably want to make your two hard drives work as master/slave on the primary connector, and make the CD-ROM the master on the secondary connector

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Scanner fits into drive bay • Last year Storm Software introduced the innovative EasyPhoto Scanner, a small scanner designed specifically to scan photographic pictures into a PC. Now Storm has released the EasyPhoto Drive, a new photo scanner designed to fit into a 5.25 inch computer drive bay. Like its predecessor, its purpose is to scan photos into things like letters, flyers and reports in 24-bit true color.

The EasyPhoto Drive scans at 400 dots per inch (dpi) optical resolution, which can be enhanced up to 1 200 dpi through software. Using the EasyPhoto Software, users can adjust the colors and the brightness/contrast of their images and are provided with the tools to remove scratches, "red-eye," crop, resize and rotate their photos.

The software also enables users to create a screen saver using the photos that are scanned, make a slide show or use a photo as Windows wallpaper. Its maximum feed-in size for the EasyPhoto Drive is 12.7x17.7 cm (5x7 in.) and its maximum effective scan area is 10x15.2 cm (4x6 in.). It automatically launches EasyPhoto software when a photo is inserted into the drive.

The EasyPhoto Drive can be used with any PC running Microsoft Windows 3.1 or Windows 95 that has 486 CPU or better, a VGA or higher display, 8 MB RAM, 13 MB of available hard-disk space and an available 5.25-inch drive bay. EasyPhoto Drive and software is available for $299. —KS-R

Contact: Storm Software Tel. 800-275-5734
Web site: http://www.stormsoft.com/storm/

Amelio charts Apple's turnaround • Apple Computer Inc.'s chief executive officer Gil Amelio presented a positive view of the pioneering computer company's efforts to turn around from its recent troubles during a speech to a Toronto audience Oct. 9.

Saying that Apple is back on the road to profitability (Apple posted a US$25 million profit in its latest quarter following losses over three quarters that totalled more than US$800 million) Amelio claimed "We are moving successfully into a new era for the company that will take us from a dialogue centred on survival of the company to a dialogue on the exciting future of Apple.

"We are aggressively licensing the Mac OS [operating system]. In the last 90 days we have announced Motorola and IBM products for the Mac OS. We are working with IBM on a notebook product for the Mac OS that both companies intend to take to the market," he said.

Amelio claimed that the company's future strategies will be concentrated on Internet-based networking, and the "convergence" of all kinds of information media via computer and Internet technologies. Amelio claimed Apple retains its strong third-place position in the Canadian PC market, and expects to grow the Canadian business and market share substantially.

One possible result of Apple's new emphasis on licensing its operating system and other software properties may be that the company finally realizes its long held claim that it's primarily "a software company." With increased production of Mac compatible products by other manufacturers the company's biggest source of revenue and profits in the next century might be in software. —JE

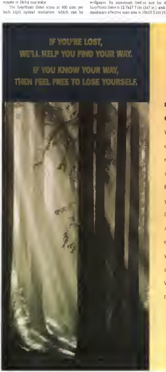
Contact: Apple Canada 905-477 5800
Web site: http://www.apple.ca

Bell Canada purchases CD-ROM for schools • Bell Canada president John McLennan recently announced that his firm has purchased more than 12 000 copies of the new Alexander Graham Bell CD-ROM and will be donating copies to every school in Ontario and Quebec. The disc, produced by Fitzgerald Studio of Nova Scotia, is available in both English and French and looks at the life, times and many inventions of the man best known for inventing the telephone.

Alexander Graham
Bell

The purchase is believed to be the largest single sale of a Canadian educational CD-ROM. The company says the gesture is part of celebrations of the 120th anniversary of the telephone, and the 150th anniversary of Bell's birth next year. Bell Canada sees Bell as a great positive role model and hopes the donation will motivate some students to pursue careers in science and technology. —KS-R

Contact: Fitzgerald Studio Tel. 800-575-2321
Web site: http://www.chatsubo.com/fitzgerald/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WHAT'S NEW

Silicon Graphics takes another jump • As PC makers like IBM begin to nibble at the low end of the workstation market by exploiting advances in processor technology, the traditional leaders in high performance desktop computing, such as Sun, HP and Silicon Graphics (SGI) have been forced to move rapidly to keep their performance lead over the now not-so-lowly PC.

Mountain View, Calif.-based SGI has just announced a major revamping of its product line with ultra-powerful computers that can offer input-output bandwidth of up to 82 gigabits per second (about 2,000 times the real world performance of the typical PC's PCI architecture) and unparalleled high-speed RAM and central processor (CPU) performance.

A new architecture called S2MP will, according to SGI, offer a quantum leap in performance and a radical drop in prices.

"We are once again raising the bar on graphics performance," says SGI chairman and chief executive officer Ed McCracken. "What's more, with the new entry price points, we moved the performance of graphics supercomputing to the high-end workstation space, opening up whole new markets and applications for this technology."

Part of the new technology wave from SGI is the Infinite reality graphics system, which can simultaneously process graphics, imaging, and video data in real time. The S2MP is highly scalable (up to 64 processors in some standard configurations) and increases input/output bandwidth with the addition of each new processor.

One of the new top [illegible] the ominously titled multi-pipe [illegible] Monster (where do they get these names?) delivers rendering speeds of 80 million polygons per second and pixel fills of over 5.3 billion textured anti-aliased pixels per second. This makes the Monster up to eight times faster than SGI's previous fastest Onyx model.

At a somewhat less monstrous level, SGI is introducing its new O2 desktop workstation line incorporating a new Web-integrated user environment, the computer industry's first high performance unified memory architecture (UMA) and advanced image processing, video, data compression and 3D features. For $9,200, a new O2 workstation offers 10 times the power of its immediate predecessor, the $10,200 Indy workstation.

"The O2 line empowers individuals within creative and technical organizations who significantly drive (their) company's competitive edge," according to SGI president Dave Black.

One of the first Canadian customers for the O2 is Sheridan College, which has the world's leading computer animation training facility from which many of the principal computer animators have graduated to work on movies such as *Jurassic Park*, *The Mask*, and *Independence Day*.

With its new products, officially launched on Oct. 29, SGI has once again positioned itself a good two to three years ahead of its PC competitors and maintained the "drool factor" of its dream machines versus the Intel-based competition. —*JE*

Contact: SGI Canada Tel: 905-625-4747
Web site: http://www.sgi.com/international/Canada

Casiopeia offers Windows to your hand • Casio Computer Co. Ltd., has two new handheld PC devices that use the Windows CE operating [illegible] (with 2 MB RAM) and the A 11 (with 4 MB RAM) should be available before the end of the year.

According to Casio Canada Inc. in Scarborough, Ont., the A 10 will have an estimated street price of $699 while the A 11 is expected to cost $899.

The Casiopeias will be using the new Windows CE operating system, formerly known as Pegasus, which was developed for handheld PCs (or HPCs). Windows CE is a 32-bit operating system that uses a subset of the Win32 API and sports a graphical interface that resembles Windows 95.

The Casio devices will have a backlit screen and keyboard, but will also accept input from a stylus. Also available is an optional docking unit that allows the files between the Casiopeia and a desktop PC running Windows 95 to be easily synchronized.

Included as built-in applications are Microsoft Pocket Word and Pocket Excel. Also available are MS Pocket Mail for e-mail and Pocket Internet Explorer Web browser. The device also includes a built-in organizer suite with address book, to-do list, etc. —*DT*

Contact: Casio Canada Ltd. Tel: 416-431-3747

Microsoft Windows CE

Here's what your next PDA might look like. Note: This screen is Casiopeia's. The image is taken from Microsoft's Windows CE Web page

Forte releases Free Agent 1.1 • Forte recently announced the release of Free Agent 1.1, the latest version of their online/offline news reader software for the Internet. This newest release of Free Agent includes a number of enhancements over the original Free Agent 1.0, including enhanced support for 32-bit Windows 95 and improved navigational tools.

The new version of Free Agent includes true multi-tasking and the ability to deal with long file names. It enables users to keep track of threaded articles by using both the subject and the article ID of message. Users can dip into a newsgroup and get some sample articles before deciding whether to subscribe to a group. A progress indicator indicates how much of an individual binary attachment has been downloaded, and the program is capable of supporting multiple character sets for reading posts written in other languages.

Free Agent 1.1 (16- and 32-bit versions) requires a Windows-capable PC with at least 10 MB of available hard-disk space. Free Agent 1.1 is available for download from Forte's home page. —*KS-R*

Contact: Forte Tel: 819-431-6400
Web site: http://www.forteinc.com/new/newinfo.htm

The Web gets HiP • People who buy the retail versions of Microsoft Internet Explorer Starter Kit or copies of the Windows 95 operating system will now get a copy of SoftQuad's HoTMetaL Intranet Publisher (HiP) Viewer, providing users with a new way to view Web documents. The HiP Viewer, an add-on to current Web browsers, redefines the way users access information on the Internet and intranets.

The HiP Viewer is an ActiveX control that enables users to view Web documents in a way best suited to their needs. Users can create a table of contents for the Web site they are viewing.

STRAIGHT TALK ABOUT PD

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WHAT IS PD?

It's the most unique technology in multimedia computing today. PD combines two extraordinary functions into one unit: it's an optical rewritable drive, plus a CD-ROM drive.

As the most advanced technique in reading and writing, PD's rewritable optical drive can write and rewrite volumes of data in a single pass, or read great masses of information in a blink of an eye. And with its CD-ROM, you've got access to a whole new multimedia world including CD-ROMs, audio CDs, and Photo CDs.

WHAT'S THE BENEFIT?

PD uses PD cartridges which provide endless amounts of storage for all kinds of data. These high-performance, high-capacity cartridges have 650 MB capacity (that's the equivalent to 450 floppy disks!). Each one can be written and rewritten over 1,000,000 times and be removed from the drive to be interchanged with other PD systems. Therefore, you've got the absolute highest storage capacity for data files, internet files, graphic files, and audio files. Plus, you have the ability to remove all data, transport it, and secure it for over 30 years.

WHAT OPERATING SYSTEM DOES IT SUPPORT?

PD supports major operating systems: DOS, Windows 3.11, Windows 95, Windows NT, OS/2, Novell, and System 7 for Macintosh.

IS PD ONLY USED IN PANASONIC PRODUCTS?

Panasonic created PD technology, so of course it's available in a variety of our products. But, we've also formed licensing and marketing partnerships with other manufacturers [illegible] PD. You'll find PD is currently being used by: Compaq, NEC, Imation (3M), Epson, Mitsubishi Chemical, Plasmon Data, TEAC, and Tony.

WHERE IS PD GOING IN THE FUTURE?

PD is one of the most advanced and cost effective storage solutions available today. With more PC makers building PD into their latest line of multimedia PCs, PD is quickly becoming the industry's new standard for multimedia.

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Panasonic also markets various data storage products which include: Floppy disk drive, CD-ROM drive, CD Recordable drive, CD-ROM Changer, PD Drive, and PD/CD-ROM Library high capacity storage devices.

For more information visit our web site: [illegible]www.panasonic.ca

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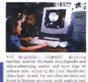
Users are also able to create annotations to other people's Web pages. These annotations are saved as a separate layer that appears on top of a Web page but does not affect the source document, providing a useful way of keeping track of information while doing research on the Web.

SoftQuad said the HoTMetaL intranet Publisher should be available by press time but it had not announced final pricing. The H.I.P. Viewer is available for downloading from SoftQuad's Web site.—*KS K*

Contact: SoftQuad Tel 416-544-9000
Web site http://www.softquad.com

Packard Bell Platinum series offers "convergence" to the max • Packard Bell, a leading PC vendor in North America, has launched its largest line of premium home PCs, targetted to compete with first tier PC vendors such as Compaq, IBM/Aptiva, Apple and Dell for the high-end home market.



The Platinum line claims a rich feature set of well-integrated multimedia features including television compatibility/display, copier, fax machine, games unit, stereophonic CD player, VCR, p[illegible]g machine, scanner, electronic encyclopaedia and videoconferencing station, and more than 40 software titles including the Corel WordPerfect Office Suite. As well, the line offers the latest and fastest in Pentium processors, multi-gigabyte hard drives, and 16 MB or more of RAM.

The Platinum line is designed to offer the maximum "convergence"—the buzzword for all media combined through computer technology. The Platinum Pro 650 model has a list price of $3,199.—*JE*

A $5,000 stocking stuffer for the network administrator in the family • Fluke Canada has announced the Fluke OneTouch Network Assistant, a compact device that allows even a relative novice to perform sophisticated and effective troubleshooting on Ethernet networks.

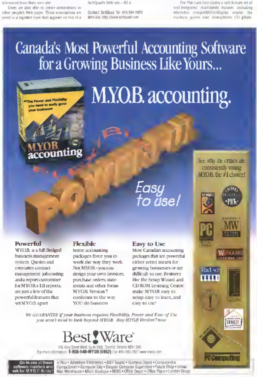
Resembling a fat N[illegible] the OneTouch uses an icon-based interface and a touch screen to make verifying network connections and diagnosing network problems simple for front line support technicians and Help Desk staff.

"This is the first tool to specifically address those on the front lines of network support who play a critical role in an overall network maintenance strategy," says Marc Tremblay, national program manager for Fluke Electronics Canada. "Tools previously on the market were either too limited in application or too complicated for those who are first called when a network problem arises. The OneTouch Network Assistant, from its targeted feature set to its icon-based touchscreen interface, is a tool made with these individuals in mind."

In tests in TCP's Lab, our technical editor Chris Fisher found the OneTouch to live up to its press release hype. By simply plugging the OneTouch unit into a network connector and touching the Autotest icon, it proves network connectivity from desktop stations to local routers and servers by automatically executing a series of cable and packet level connectivity tests. When a problem is detected, OneTouch indicates its source by a flashing icon. By touching the icon, the user gets detailed information on the faulty component, such as its IP or MAC address or cable map results. It also identifies and performs individual tests for hubs and network interface cards (NICs).

"With verification of network connectivity made this simple, we expect the most used application for the OneTouch Network Assistant will be ensuring the proper installation of moves, adds and changes," says Tremblay.

In short, Fluke has packed what amounts to a network troubleshooting and diagnosis operating system into this handheld device. Its potential to



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simplify operations and reduce costs is hard to overstate. With networks becoming pervasive in business operations of all sizes (and with branch offices often lacking permanent network administration staff) the OneTouch is a very cost effective way to reduce the frequency and cost of network problems.

The OneTouch is available in two configurations: a 10 Mbps Ethernet model for a suggested retail price of $5,634, and a 10/100 Mbps model for $7,566.—JE

Contact: Fluke. Tel: 905-890-6866.
Web site: http://www.fluke.com/nettools

Mac-compatible world expands with new Motorola PCs • Motorola Computer Group (MCG) has announced the release of two new families of personal computers based on the Power PC chip. One of the new families, the StarMax line, runs the Mac OS, under license from Apple, and the other, the PowerStack II family, runs Windows NT 4.0 or, soon, AIX, a version of UNIX.

The StarMax PCs are based on Power PC 603e and 604e processors, and according to Motorola offer high level multimedia performance at very competitive prices. Motorola, which along with IBM and Apple developed the Power PC chip technology, announced a licensing agreement with Apple some months ago, and with the release of the new line becomes the second significant licensee of Apple's Mac OS. (The other manufacturer is Power Computing, which has had considerable success with its well regarded line of Mac compatibles. Two other licensed makers of multi processor Macs failed to find a significant market for their products.)

"The company's [MCG's] goal has been to expand the Macintosh Market Internationally. We know there is a demand for high performance, quality Mac systems. Now with our new StarMax family, customers can feel confident that the systems they purchase meet Motorola's impeccable standards of quality, at an affordable price," says Joe Guglielmi, MCG's corporate vice-president and general manager.

The StarMax family is divided into an entry-level 3000 series, with a 603e CPU, 16 MB of RAM, 256K of L2 cache, 1.2 GB internal storage, and three PCI slots. The high-powered 4000 series is based on the 604e CPU, in 160 and 200 MHz versions, with 512K cache, 2 MB EDO DRAM video, 16 MB of RAM, and 1.2 GB drive. All units come with an unusually extensive five-year warranty and suggested prices of $2,215 to $4,995.

The PowerStack II offerings have roughly comparable hardware configurations and pricing, but run Windows NT 4.0 or AIX operating systems. One weakness of the PowerStack approach to NT is that by offering a Power PC-based computer, Motorola's customers won't have access to the largest library of NT software, which has been compiled to run on the Intel platform. Users of NT computers based on Alpha or MIPS processors face this same limitation. According to Motorola, large numbers of key software developers are currently doing Power PC-compatible versions of their Windows NT titles.

Motorola representatives say that with the forthcoming release of the Common Hardware Reference Platform standard (CHRP or "chirp") for Power PC computers, the company can be expected to release PCs that will run Mac OS, NT or AIX on the same system.

The Mac-compatible world seems destined to expand, both in terms of performance and number of makers. An announcement by San Jose, Calif.-based Exponential Technology claimed that the company would be shipping a 533 MHz Power PC chip by mid 1997 for inclusion in Mac and compatible computers. Umax, a manufacturer of scanners for the Mac and PC market, announced it is planning to release a line of Mac compatibles, aimed at the graphic arts market.—JE

Contact: Motorola. Tel: 905 507 7200
Web site: http://www.mot.com/computer/

Quantum launches new hard drive lines • Quantum Corporation has announced a new line of 5.25-inch hard drives that, it claims, offer the highest capacities and fastest data transfer rates in the industry.

Two of the new models come with versions—the Quantum Bigfoot CY 6.4, Fast ATA 2, and the Quantum Fireball ST 6.4 Ultra ATA—with a capacity of 6.4 GB.

"These hard drives set new standards for the desktop marketplace and confirm Quantum's leadership position," says the president of Quantum's desktop storage group, Young Sohn. "We moved aggressively to implement MR ➤

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WHAT'S NEW

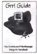
[magneto resistive] head technology in our desktop products, including the 5 25 inch family, and we re clearly seeing the benefits of that now with per-platter capacities that are unmatched in the industry"

The Bigfoot CY 6.4 Fast ATA-2 has a street price of about $495 and the Quantum Fireball ST 6.4 Ultra ATA should sell for about $595 —*JE*

Contact: Quantum Web site
http://www quantum com

WebGrrls rock! • Historically, women have often had to contend with a "boys club" atmosphere in the high technology field of computing.

In this writer's own experience, there was a great deal of interest among women in the artistic, educational video and communications capability of the Amiga when it was first relased But although the attendance of early Amiga user group meetings was 30 to 50 percent female that number quickly dropped to a stubborn few women as men came to monopolize the discussions and egoda raving about hardware issues, trading pirated software, showing off-color pictures, and generally hogging the limelight.



Similarly the World Wide Web has adopted an overwhelmingly male tone In an attempt to make the Web more accessible and friendly to women, Aliza Sherman, of New York, started WebGrrls in April 1995

WebGrrls ("grrls" now being common slang for a humorous, women-friendly take-no-crap attitude towards popular culture) has since gone international with chapters from Japan to Barbados. The Toronto chapter formed in December 1995 and the Mississauga chapter followed in May 1996

The GTA (Greater Toronto Area) WebGrrls held a gala launch in September at Toronto's Dot.COM cyber cafe, followed the next day by a Junior WebGrrls Day WebGrrls maintains a Web site, online newsletter as well as running monthly meetings, and seminars. WebGrrls GTA also publishes the GrrlGuide handbook, a good general resource for any Web newbie.

Web Grrls also has chapters in Brantford, North Halton/North Peel and St Catharines Ont. Montreal, Prince George B C, and Vancouver Web sites are pending for most of these groups.—*JE*

Contact: GTA WebGrrls
Web site: http://www webgrrls.com/toronto
Vancouver WebGrrls
Web site: http://www.webpool.com/webgrrls

Micrografx CreateCard Plus! Just-in-time technology for making Xmas cards • Micrografx, one of the main consumer graphics software publishers has released CreataCard Plus in association with the American Greetings Corp The new title is intended to allow average PC users to quickly and easily design high-quality customized greeting cards and other documents

AMERICAN GREETINGS
CreataCard Plus

According to Micrografx CreataCard Plus is "a convenient and enjoyable way to design personally expressive cards, awards announcements, invitations, certificates signs and stationery" The basic package contains more than 3 000 designs on a disc that users can customiz with text and graphics using intuitive software options.

If the basic designs are not enough additional, new or theme designs may be purchased over the Internet from an online card shop In addition to printing out color or black and white cards the program allows users to create electronic greeting cards and send them to a recipient, via the Internet using American Greetings' remote fulfilment service, Personal Delivery The street price is estimated at $49 95.

Contact: Micrografx, Tel 800-676-3110
Web site http://www micrografx.com or

Greater Toronto area launches Web site • NB—The Greater Toronto Area—Metropolitan Toronto and surrounding cities and towns—has launched a Web site. In cooperation with IBM Canada Ltd the municipalities have put up GTA Online which they said focuses on business development and economic development services in the area.

Continued on page **17**

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P-133, Intel Pentium	$2874	$3002	$3233
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Local Bus Video RAM	VLB 1 mb	PCI 2 mb
Max. Removable HDD,	2 GB	2 GB
Floppy Drive	1.44 mb	1.44 mb
DSTN Colour LCD	10", 640x480	12.1" 800x600
External Monitor	simultaneous, 1024x768	
Ports	1 parallel 1 serial, 1 external video port	
Two PCMCIA slots	Type II & III	Type II & III
SVGA, PCMCIA Drivers	Included	Included
Pointing Device	Pointing device	Trackpad
Battery Type	NiMH	NiMH
Sound	16-bit, speaker /microphone	
Joystick	No	Yes
CD ROM	Optional external	built-in 6xCD ROM
Carry Case, AC Adaptor	Included	Included
Dimensions (inches)	11.3 x 10 x 2.2	11.7 x 8.8 x 2.2
Battery Life w/power mgmt	2–3 hours	approx 1 hr with cdrom

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WHAT'S NEW

Continued from page 14

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Four Canadian universities join global campus • NB—Four Canadian universities have signed up for IBM's Global Campus initiative a program that will let students and prospective students communicate with universities through online networks. The first four Canadian participants in the program are Acadia University in Nova Scotia, Athabasca University in Alberta, Ecole des Hautes Etudes Commerciales in Quebec and Queen's University in Ontario.

What's New is compiled by Jeff Evans, Keith Schengili-Roberts, Chris Fisher, Graeme Bennett, David Tanaka and Megan Johnston.

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CorelDRAW 7 for Windows 95 launched at annual gala

BY JEFF EVANS

Ottawa-based Corel Corp. launched the latest version of its popular CorelDRAW graphics suite in the nation's capital on Oct. 7 In a series of events for hundreds of international computer media folk culminating in a gala event at the recently named Corel Centre (Ottawa's domed sports complex) attended by about 8,000 people Corel presented its entire product lineup and announced the winners of its annual art contest.

CorelDRAW 7

The new version of CorelDRAW is like its immediate predecessor CorelDRAW 6 a 32-bit Windows 95- or Windows NT-compatible program In an excellent demonstration, its new features were shown off, including much increased speed in file loading and screen refreshes, improved color management transparency options Internet publishing tools and greatly enhanced paint options

The three main components of the new version are DRAW 7 the vector-illustration program Photo-Paint 7 a bitmap-editing and image-processing program and CorelDREAM3D 7, a 3D-design and rendering package A host of utilities including CorelMULTIMEDIA MANAGER, CorelDEPTH a 3D-text extrusion and effects program, Corel CAPTURE, a screen capture utility 32,000 clipart images 1,000 photos 1,000 TrueType and Type 1 fonts, and a host of other software round out the package

Sales of CorelDRAW 6, introduced in 1995 probably suffered somewhat from the company's commitment to a Windows 95 only version at a time when the installed base of Windows 95-compatible PCs was just starting to build.

Now, however, with the base of Windows 95 users in the tens of millions and growing rapidly, sales of the new version should be more robust With the release of Version 7, Version 6 will be withdrawn from the market, but Corel will continue to support Versions 3, 4, and 5 which have continued to sell strongly to PC users running Windows 3x 16-bit operating systems.

The Corel art contest

One of the most effective techniques Corel has developed to encourage interaction with its CorelDRAW customers is its ongoing series of art competitions. Corel runs monthly competitions with its customers, encouraging them to submit their best work created with Corel graphics products, culminating in an annual competition, which this year awarded more than $3,000 000 in prizes ranging from cash to computer hardware and software

Contest judges drawn from members of the media in attendance voted electronically on the finalists pre-selected from the thousands of entries A combination art book/CD-ROM is published every year (and typically sells more than 100,000 copies, which is a lot for a CD-ROM) containing the best of the art submitted

Corel product showcase

Corel staged a fair-sized trade show in connection with the CorelDRAW 7 launch, displaying its entire line of products, along with displays of products by strategic third-party partners Corel previewed its latest Corel Home titles, including some excellent educational titles (a virtual Chem Lab was very impressive) demonstrated by Ottawa area students The full range of other Corel products was on view, including the CorelVIDEO videophone and videoconferencing line.

Corel chief executive officer Michael Cowpland stated that the CorelVIDEO line's sales have grown from zero to over $1.2 million in the last year, and the growth rate seemed to be increasing exponentially He mentioned that CorelVIDEO was the first videoconferencing product line that scaled from high-speed enterprise video networking all the way down to home desktop PC videophones using the Internet and regular phone lines. Corel also had its reference titles on display, including its medical line

Of particular interest to this writer was the new version of CorelVentura which was being shown in an advanced beta version. Ventura Publisher, which had once dominated large-document production on the PC, had been lagging behind other desktop publishing titles such as Quark Xpress and Adobe PageMaker prior to Corel's acquisition of the title and many users of its most recent version, 6.0, had complained of bugs that made the product difficult to use.

In conversation with *TCP* the CorelVentura development team claimed that the new version had undergone a full re-write as a 32-bit Windows 95 title, finally eliminating the last vestiges of the old GEM code (a mid-1980s graphic user interface competitor to Microsoft Windows) that had been responsible for part of the bugginess of Version 6.0. CorelVentura, with a host of new features that make it a powerful Web publishing tool as well as a print document system, will be released in the first quarter of 1997, according to Corel.

Corel's future

Cowpland was in evidence throughout the proceedings In a keynote address, he admitted that there had been challenges in incorporating the WordPerfect line into Corel, but said that the results in terms of market acceptance had been extremely lucrative, and the integration has gone astonishingly well.

Formerly a strong strategic ally of Microsoft, Corel's entry into the office software suite market, in direct competition with Microsoft, seems to have created a degree of estrangement between the two companies. Cowpland showed slides of industry projections about computer operating system sales, which predicted Microsoft's sales would level off and even decline over the next several years, as network computers (NCs) and Java-based computing systems begin to proliferate ➤

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PowerPC Amiga prototype to debut at Computer Fest

Canadian Amiga users, still smarting from the collapse of the German Amiga manufacturer Escom (an event that disrupted the promising revival of the Amiga personal computer platform) will be heartened to know that an all-new Amiga computer user's show will be part of the Computer Fest at Toronto's International Centre from Nov 29 to Dec 1.

Dubbed Amiga Fest, show organizers claim that more than 20 Amiga specific vendors are expected to participate in this special component of the larger Computer Fest activities

Amiga users still loyal to "Amy '
Over 100 000 Amigas were sold in Canada between 1985 and 1994, with a large percentage of those bought by users in the Toronto area A significant number of those Amigas are still in use, especially for video, art and graphics creation and many Amiga loyalists continue to enhance the usability of their Amigas with third-party products now mainly produced in Germany and the United Kingdom.

"At least 5,000 Amiga users are expected to join over 20 000 regular Computer Fest visitors for what promises to be the biggest Christmas show yet " according to show organizers

PowerPC Amiga to be demonstrated
Phase 5 Digital of Germany is to show a prototype of a new generation Amiga platform, based on the PowerPC chip A production version may reach the market in late 1997, so this appearance is a rare early opportunity to see what may be the Amiga s best bet for renewed long-term viability

Phase 5 will also show its newly released Cyberstorm Mark II accelerator board. Accelerator cards and high-performance graphics cards have been one of the principal routes by which Amiga users have boosted the performance of their Motorola 68x-based systems, to keep up with speed increases in the Mac and Wintel computing platforms

Latest Video Toaster products to be highlighted
Don Balance from NewTek, the company that revolutionized desktop video and animation with the Amiga Video Toaster system, will be on hand to demonstrate the latest enhancements in the Amiga Video Toaster hardware and software and to discuss the Flyer non-linear editing system. At the show PC versions of NewTek's products will also be on display, and the new Mac version of LightWave 3D will be released

Amiga enthusiasts, long known for being among the most loyal and resourceful group of computer users in the history of personal computing have managed to keep the Amiga s flame burning through some difficult times. Amiga Fest is a timely opportunity to gauge the state of the Amiga art, and mingle with other boosters of a computer whose visionary technology has yet to be surpassed

The International Centre is located on Airport Road, near Pearson International Airport, with free parking, and TTC bus access available —JE

Contact. ShowFest Productions Tel 416-925-4533.

CorelDRAW 7

Continued from page **18**

Corel, said Cowpland, is about to take advantage of the prospects of Java software, by releasing the first all-Java office software suite sometime in early 1997. Such a suite of business applications would be truly cross-platform compatible and if Java becomes widely accepted as many predict may form the basis for a whole new software market

Corel's many product initiatives are giving the company a variety of opportunities to grow as new areas of computing, such as the Internet and multimedia, continue to expand rapidly though the company is taking risks by going out on the leading edge of a rapidly changing technological landscape If even a few of Corel's new initiatives achieve their potential Corel may reach its goal of becoming a full rival to Microsoft, in revenue as well as vision. ❑

Contact. Corel Web site http://www corel.com

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Software gifts for kids

BY JEAN ALLEN-IKESON

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They're happy. I'm getting peace of mind. What else could I ask for? A holiday present that is still used a month later. Something that enriches their life while they have fun.

But going to the software super store can be a bit overwhelming. There are so many excellent programs available that it can be difficult to choose. That's why you read *The Computer Paper.* We're here to help and make it look easy.

Mapping the territory

But, even armed with our advice, there are a few pointers you should keep in mind while perusing box covers in your local stores. Age ratings on the boxes are a guideline *only.* For software that appears to contain text, make sure it has an audio "self-read" function or it will be lost on most children in Grade 2 or under. Those programs that do read text to the child help build reading skills. They also encourage research and experimentation with encyclopedias and dictionaries that otherwise would be postponed until a later age.

For math programs, a little common sense goes a long way. If the box lists multiplication or fractions as well as shapes, addition, etc., then either it may be too difficult for most younger children or it is a program that will grow as the child advances in school.

For most children somewhere between Grade 2 and 3 there is a point at which reading, writing and rudimentary math skills have been established. Kids can be challenged by more complex tasks that involve these skills.

The exception to software that is too complex for younger kids are wonderful programs such as Microsoft's Explorapedia. This encyclopedia reads the text orally so that even Grade 1 children can do their own research in wild African cats, dinosaurs or Egyptian mummies. With the text on the screen, they can copy essential spelling needed for simple stories.

Math programs for younger children tend to be drill-and-kill types camouflaged thinly in a game format. Sanctuary Woods has started developing math programs for older primary school children that use real life situations such as baseball or football to calculate "statistics." This is applied math rather than contrived math.

Educational programs for children eight years and under are most likely to involve reading skills including phonics and books on CD-ROM, math, art or writing. A few programs such as the Jumpstart series offer a sampling of many skills from a year's school curriculum. The variety of social studies and science programs is pretty thin.

For children nine and older, reading is incorporated as a part of the programs. The field has exploded with science and social science software over the last year. Finally, there is something substantial with variety for older children beyond software that involves shooting Martians with math problems or playing spelling games. The major book publishers, such as Simon & Schuster, Houghton-Mifflin and McGraw-Hill, have jumped into the market and are storming the scene with a flood of new educational software. This is territory that was, until recently, left to edutainment icons such as Learning Co., Davidson, MECC, Edmark and Knowledge Adventure.

This new wave ranges from mostly game content with grammar or history slipped in (I.M. Meen or Chill Manor) to mainly teaching content (science or social science) camouflaged with a game background (Beyond the Naked Eye or How Would You Survive?)

Part 1
Out of the crib to Grade 2

Jumpstart Toddlers

From Knowledge Adventure
Requires Windows/Mac
Price $47

Knowledge Adventure has the most basic but full-featured program around for toddlers aged 18 months to three years called Jumpstart Toddlers. If they are old enough to watch *Sesame Street* and stack blocks, then they are ready to begin learning numbers and the alphabet with Giggles the Gopher. The program is lively and each activity brings a musical reward. This same company has boasted that it will eventually offer Jumpstart programs from the crib to graduate school. At the moment they will play with your children through Grade 2. All are priced similarly and are dual platform. Each is curriculum based, meaning that they teach or practice skills that are appropriate for that particular age and grade. They offer progressively more learning "modules" per program adding science, geography, music and culture. Each is fun and designed to keep the child working and exploring.

None of my children has willingly completed 30 or 40 pages in a math or grammar workbook, but each was happy to work with these programs for hours. They motivate the child to complete exercises.

Progress Report
ABC's
ABC order
Colors
Numbers
Sorting by Shape

Fisher-Price Ready for Pre-School
Fisher-Price Ready for School, Kindergarten Edition

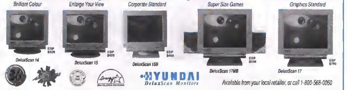
From Davidson
Requires Windows/Mac
Price $48 (Pre-School) $49 (Kindergarten)

Davidson has two similar products, and both are curriculum based as well. Fisher-Price Ready for Pre-School and Ready for School, Kindergarten Edition are two-CD-ROM sets, one disc for the child's program and one for parents and teachers. The latter discusses in interview format questions commonly asked by parents or of teachers—great for learning with your first child.

Friendly talking animals guide children through a maze of wonderful activities from recognizing letters or numbers to telling time. Ready for School contains four workbooks, which also come in softcover, on Math, Safety and Manners, Telling Time and Reading. Each book is also printable from the second CD-ROM, a handy option for classrooms.

Ready for Preschool also has a print kit with 50 pages of activities and pictures

Continued on page **22**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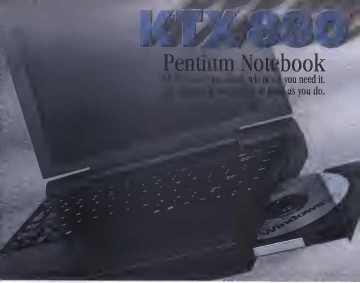

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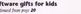
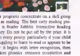


Software gifts for kids

Continued from page **20**

Softcover books with this program, called All About Me and You & Your Child are filled with interactive learning activities for both children and parents

Reader Rabbits' Interactive Reading Journey,
Interactive Reading Journey 2
From Learning Company
Requires Windows/Mac
Price $85 (Reading Journey) $99 (Journey 2)


Sam and Sis had fun in the bus. Ben the Ant had fun with the bell.

Other programs concentrate on a skill group such as reading. The best early reading program is Reader Rabbits' Interactive Reading Journey. Do not be put off by the price. It is worth every penny, particularly if your child is struggling to learn to read or appears to be ready. It begins with letter recognition, then practices phonics, sentence completion and reading as activities in each of 20 lands.

The lands are "gated" in groups so the child must complete a percentage of exercises (preset by the parent) before the next group of letter lands become available. There are two books in each land, which are also printed in softcover so that your children can show off their accomplishments at bedtime or in your lap. This provides a concrete link between computer activities and books, which is an important association.

Because this program was so successful with language-impaired children in combining reading and speaking, a microphone and record and playback features have been included in the updated version. One of the features that I appreciate the most is the simplicity of the books. If you have struggled along with a child learning to read, then you will know that most "early" reader books are really suited for late Grade 1 or 2.

The very first and most simple readers are rare. The 40 books in this program are such books and gradually progress from the first to the last to build confidence. They also force the child to discriminate on the last letter of a word rather than guessing just from the initial letter.

As my youngest practiced and progressed beyond this program, I yearned for another to give him the wonderful boost that Interactive Reading Journey had provided. Learning Co. must be clairvoyant: they have just released Interactive Reading Journey 2. The cover is similar but this one is rated for ages five to eight, while the original is for four to seven. It also has record and playback features, comes with a coupon offer for a microphone and an audio cassette of Reader Rabbit's favorite songs.

This program is more advanced and the 30 books on disc and in print form are for mid to late Grade 1. The letter lands of the earlier version are reading lands in this program. The careful planning and detail in the program follows the same high standard set by the original. One of the reasons these programs are so good is that extensive testing went into them before they hit the market. The phonics are progressively more difficult and include two-letter combinations such as pl or bl.

Reading Blaster Jr
Kids Phonics 2
From Davidson
Requires Windows/Mac
Price $49 (Blaster Jr) $55 (Phonics 2)

Reading Blaster Jr. makes a nice interim program between the two Reader Rabbit products. The new Blaster Jr series seem to be more fun than the older products for older children, partly because of the experience gained with the earlier products and extras, such as 3D graphics. And they do work in building skills and confidence.

Learning to read involves a lot of simple practice and skill building, and this program provides it. A print kit with 25 books lets children print out their own copy to read and show off.

Other products are available that help children practice a single aspect of reading. One such program is Kids Phonics 2 from Davidson. Software companies have responded where ministries of education have not to parents' desires for more phonics in the classroom. This program includes mini-games in a Wild West theme. Words are built with phonetic connections in the Word Builder Ranch then used to create sentences in the Sentence Builder Corral. They make an otherwise tedious and boring subject enjoyable.

Word Munchers Deluxe
From MECC
Requires Windows/Mac
Price $38

MECC has updated an old favorite into Word Munchers Deluxe. One of the best features about MECC is the outstanding supplementary materials the company produces for teachers to use with each program. This is a company that has been producing educational software for 25 years! It is no surprise, then, to find this program or its predecessor in many Grade 1 and 2 classes. Munchers reinforces reading and grammar skills and builds vocabulary in a fun way.

My First Incredible Amazing Dictionary
My First Amazing Words and Pictures
From Dorling Kindersley
Requires Windows
Price $38 (Words and Pictures)

For young children. If I could only buy a few programs, the two Interactive Reading Journeys would be at the top of the list along with Dorling Kindersley's My First Incredible Amazing Dictionary which can also be found bundled with books, stickers and flash cards in a package called My First Amazing Words and Pictures. Words are included in an icon picture list so children can find a word without knowing its spelling. From here the word is pronounced and a definition read to the child. Hot links lead to exploration of similar ideas.

Each word in the list also has a hot link to related words. So if Grade 1 children are just beginning to write, they can find out how to spell barn, cow, pig and tractor to go along with the original word farm, for example. It takes some of the pain out of writing and teaches children to use and value a dictionary which is a fundamental and essential skill.

Kids Works Deluxe
From Davidson
Requires Windows/Mac
Price $48

For encouraging early writing skills I have three favorites. First is Kids Works Deluxe from Davidson. This is a word processor designed especially for young children. The default screen looks just like the double-lined paper used in kindergarten and first grade. The letters are also identical to children's printing, rather than more complex fonts with serifs.

Writers type in the words they know or can choose icons from a large picture library to insert instead of print. Icons may be customized and linked to new words as well. At any time, a button click will convert these to words or back to icons again. The program will also read the story aloud to the child. For children who love to put on plays, there is the option of six different voices to be attached to the text. Pictures may be drawn to illustrate the stories as well.

Read, Write and Type
Read, Write and Play
From Learning Company
Requires Windows/Mac
Price $55 each

➤

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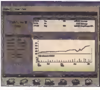

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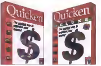

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The future belongs to the WiReD

Learning Co has come up with a great but obvious idea why not teach letter recognition reading writing and typing all at the same time? This they attempt in a program called Read Write and Type

Psychologists have long known that the more ways you practice a problem, the better the learning So, hearing a letter reading it on the screen and finding and typing it on the keyboard go together for more effective learning—and as a bonus keyboard skills improve. The program also sneaks in phonics exercises with the typing exercises

Because children are saying and typing letters that form words in the exercises, they are also practicing spelling without realizing it. Any words that you can add to a young child's repertoire are a big bonus, since both reading and writing come more easily as a result. This terrific concept is well executed here

A companion program is Read, Write and Play It also has some original features to help children write Writing is more than linking a few words together with a capital and a period Children must learn how to write and put together their thoughts into sentences and short stories This may seem simple-minded but teachers will be nodding their heads in agreement

Part of writing involves coming up with an idea and telling about it. This program helps with the idea part It has an art studio, a travel centre and a writing centre In the travel centre, there are story ideas in 10 places the Arctic Africa, city farm, home, beach pond ocean school and space While exploring these places word lists can be built from a generous list to aid in story writing The program helps with story ideas on subjects that kids love to write about and then helps with spelling and vocabulary Every first grade classroom should have this program! Even four and five year olds can read their own books by choosing one of 100 or so interactive story books available on CD ROM

Green Eggs and Ham
From Living Books
Requires Windows/Mac
Price $50

Whether your child learned to read before or after the computer revolution, he or she probably "thrilled" you with endless sessions with Dr Seuss I have read or listened to my children read *Green Eggs and Ham* until I was to the point of calling the Children's Aid to remove it from the house before I committed some unspeakable crime

I guess I was born too soon Living Books bought the electronic publishing rights to the Dr Seuss series of books and guess what their first production was? Green Eggs and Ham! This version comes in full interactive glory and in a printed edition as well (hide it!) There are three levels so toddlers—as well as five and six year olds—can have fun Simple rhyming games reinforce learning. Children can use the 'read-to-me' mode or read by themselves.

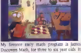
Sleeping Cub's Test of Courage
From Davidson
Requires Windows/Mac
Price $56

Another new book worthy of note is Sleeping Cub's Test of Courage a native American folk tale This is the story of a young native American boy in his quest for the vanishing buffalo In his search for the mythical Elk Dogs who will help him, he discovers courage and bravery Davidson has pushed the technology with "cinema-quality animation" I like this one because it teaches values while it encourages reading

P.J s Reading Adventure
From Reading Adventure
Requires Windows
Price $38

A final reading product of note is Microsoft's P.J s Reading Adventure which contains three discs, each with its own story Koi and the Koala Nuts, Paul Bunyan, and How the Leopard Got His Spots. These are read by Whoopi Goldberg, Jonathan Winters and Danny Glover respectively Each story has, besides detailed animation and the written and/or spoken story fun games, puzzles and mazes Best of all is Paul Bunyan, who will play against and teach your child checkers It is a great tutorial and will have them playing like a pro in half an hour.

James Discovers Math
From Broderbund
Requires Windows/Mac
Price $49



My favorite early math program is James Discovers Math, for three to six year olds It has all the basics number recognition, counting to 10 shape and pattern recognition, measurement and estimation addition and subtraction. The screens are simple and the activities are effective. Verbal instructions lead non readers through how to use the program, a feature common in the better programs for young children. Multiple levels allow the program to grow with your child's progress.

Continued on page **27**

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Software gifts for kids

Continued from page **24**

Mighty Math Carnival Countdown
From Edmark
Requires Windows/Mac
Price: $45

For Grades 1 to 2, Mighty Math Carnival Countdown from Edmark teaches more addition and subtraction, place value, equivalencies, problem solving and logic and early multiplication and division My favorite activity is weighing laughs in the Giggle Factory Several levels of difficulty provide a challenge for a couple of years. A nice feature is a video on the CD ROM for parents or a teacher offering advice on how to maximize the child's learning of math.

Reader Rebbit's Interactive Math Journey
From Learning Company
Requires Windows/Mac
Price $99

Reader Rabbit's Interactive Math Journey is unlike its reading namesake in that it leaves early skills to other programs A child should know numbers to 100 and simple addition and subtraction first So while the box says ages five to nine seven to nine would be more accurate

That being said, Math Journey is clever at teaching fractions multiplication and division, measurement estimation and spatial skills For example, you help a French Canadian lumberjack build a log cabin by measuring and cutting logs. It's a fun activity—and effective Also included in the box are wooden geometric shapes and plastic snap-together links for measurement and an activities book for parents to extend the value of the program

Adi s Mathematics, English or Science
From Sierra
Requires Windows
Price $58 each

Sierra has a nice series of six CD-ROMs called Adi's Mathematics English or Science that are curriculum based and useful once reading skills are up to speed There are two sets one for Grades 2 and 3 and one for Grades 5 and 6 (each grade is represented separately on the CD ROM)

Each set comes with two CD-ROMs and the set represents an ambitious project Children answer questions (there is always a tutor to help) on a number of topics such as sentence construction, grammar, spelling, etc for points that may be redeemed for Sierra games included on the disc

It is the quality and depth of topics covered that make this software so special There is also a writing, drawing and animation studio that can all be combined to produce "presentations." In another section animations explain concepts such as perimeter. A year after reviewing the product my seven and 10 year old boys are still "playing it! The questions have the same sort of material as the best and most advanced grade level workbooks but with online help and instant rewards A new series of Adi Jr. programs is just being released under the Eager to Learn group

Nikolai In Time In the Time of Knights
Nikolai s Pharaohs
From Corel
Requires Windows/Mac
Price $30 each

For social science, I like the new series of books on disc from Corel So far they have Nikolai In Time In the Time of Knights and Nikolai s Pharaohs What make these unique is the Medieval and Egyptian history slipped into the programs in a fun and entertaining fashion Numerous "sidebars" deliver more than the run-of the-mill storybook and the lessons are full of educational content.

Magic Schoolbus Dinosaurs
From Microsoft
Requires Windows 95 only
Price $50

Microsoft is a winner in science with its Magic Schoolbus series developed by Scholastic. These will provide your children with hours of exploration puzzles and learning The newest entry is Dinosaurs Among the seven locations that are explored in three geological time periods is the Cretaceous in Alberta! One of the best activities is reconstructing a dinosaur skeleton But it is not just play Along the way detailed information is told and demonstrated with wonderful animations Other high-quality titles in this series are Oceans Solar System, Inside the Earth and Human Body

My First Amazing World Explorer
From Dorling Kindersley
Requires Windows
Price: $38

Dorling Kindersley has another program called My First Amazing World Explorer that is classed as "multiple media." In addition to an interactive CD-ROM on maps and world geography there is a puzzle postcards and two wonderful books. The books contain great mapping skill activities. I showed this package to my second grader's teacher ➤

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a few weeks ago She rushed out and bought it for a month-long project and soon after the other Grade 2 teacher followed suit When a seven year old can pick up the concept of coordinates and map reading in less than an hour you know Dorling Kindersley has a winner

Kid CAD
From Davidson
Requires Windows
Price $48

Another unique program is Davidson's Kid CAD This is a child's version of adult computer-aided design programs used by engineers and architects. Lego-type shapes are used to build 3D structures which can be rotated and decorated on the inside and landscaped on the outside Zoom in or out or switch view levels for the feel of a real CAD program. To erase a design, kids have the choice of bulldozing, bombing, etc the structure Obviously there is a fun end to failed designs

All In One Language Fun!
From Syracuse Learning Systems
Requires Windows
Price US$40

For French or other languages Syracuse Learning Systems has what I think is the best collection of programs for young children All in One Language Fun! is one CD-ROM with French, German Japanese, Spanish and English games and learning activities (available directly from SLS)

They introduce common vocabulary such as colors numbers, and items in the home, school, and town In the French version, if an error is made, the audio comes on with an emotional "tragique" Equally emotional are the compliments for success In one exercise you identify parts by their French name to put together a picture puzzle Great for the first year or two of French in school

Making Music
From Voyager
Requires Windows/Mac
Price $55

Voyager has a jewel of an educational title in Making Music It is full of games and activities that teach young children sound discrimination and how to compose music. Instead of a musical staff telephone lines are dotted with birds Move them up or down and play the tune In a more complex composition screen, "notes" may be entered on the screen (size and color equal sound), duplicated, turned upside down or backwards, the scale changed and any of 16 instruments chosen Other activities teach melody, rhythm and structure

Piano Discovery for Kids
From Jump! Music
Requires Windows/Mac
Price US$45 95 (US$10 rebate in box)

Jump! Music has an overlay for the keyboard that comes with a CD ROM called Piano Discovery for Kids (Windows/Mac) that will be released before Christmas It teaches piano keyboard and music basics It is a less expensive way to experiment than with a full midi keyboard or a full-sized piano However, the program will work with any Casio Yamaha or Miracle Piano midi keyboard If your child becomes eager for more The program is rated for ages six to 12 It comes with over 300 lessons that use integrated multimedia teaching techniques

Part 2

Grades 3 to 6

For children who already know how to read and count, the possibilities in educational software start to open up creative and fun titles in science and the social sciences, such as history and culture This is a relatively new development over the last year It is great to see that software companies have decided how to treat grade 3 to 6 kids, who have grown up on Reader Rabbit and Math Blaster. Math language and curriculum-based programs still have their place.

But new ones such as Corel's Beyond the Naked Eye, which is a serious science sleuth game that teaches about bacteria and viruses and McGraw Hill's Dr. Sulfur's Chemistry Lab offer a richness of content and presentation that is a pleasure Add to that Dorling Kindersley's increasing library of Eyewitness CD-ROMs on everything from history to nature and you have a wide choice of holiday treats for your kids or grandchildren

Creative Writer, Version 2
From Microsoft
Requires Windows 95/NT only
Price $38

Microsoft may have shot themselves in the foot classroom wise The new edition of Creative Writer Version 2, cannot be used with Macs or Windows 3 1 A writing program is so essential for children this age, that to limit it to Windows 95 cuts out most strug-

Continued on page **30**

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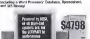
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Software gifts for kids

Continued from page **28**

gling school systems and children who inher it last year's computer from their parents.

But the possibilities for formatting text and type are excellent. For school room use, having to wade through the creative beginning without being able to easily get straight to the essay is a distraction for younger children.

The Amazing Writing Machine
From Broderbund
Requires Windows/Mac
Price $52

On the flip side, if I could put stars across the entire line to express my praise for Broderbund's The Amazing Writing Machine I would. Here is a program designed properly for kids this age. The screen menu offers five formats: story, journal, letter, essay or poem. You can choose from the format without text or one containing a pre-made but modifiable example.

Need to write grandmother a thank you note for a Christmas present of software? Simply choose letter "grandma" and voila-a prewritten letter in which your child can change the pertinent details. The text sections are in individual little boxes. Click on them and the text changes to a new possibility—or the child can type a new phrase.

For original poems, type a line and press enter. A list of possible rhymes pops up. Some are so silly that they will have your kids howling with laughter rather then groaning with pain.

The journal section is password protected so your child can enter the most secret of thoughts. There are also drawing tools and a spell checker. The interface is also simple and straightforward. I would only wish for newspaper or newsletter format so that you could arrange text in columns. The text can be shaped into a number of odd shapes such as a hat or tree or space ship, which has fun possibilities.

Write, Camera, Action!
From Broderbund
Requires Windows
Price $55

For drama and writing skills, Broderbund also has Write, Camera, Action! Children use their expressive writing skills on the set of an animated Hollywood comedy show. They must edit scripts, direct rehearsals, write news stories and movie bits, and record dialogue to create a movie box office success. The more press releases they write, the more applause they get opening night.

During the script process, a tutor pops up to offer suggestions. This program not only teaches a variety of writing scenarios, it also teaches organization of the entire show.

Ultimate Children's Encyclopedia
From Learning Company
Requires Windows
Price $55

Explorapedia: The World of Nature, Explorapedia: The World of People
From Microsoft
Requires Windows
Price $50 each

For more serious research work, Grade 3 or 4 children will find the Ultimate Children's Encyclopedia or Explorapedia: The World of Nature or The World of People a good choice for research. The former is meant for research and has 35 000 cross-linked references. It has search functions, copy/paste, automatic formatting of footnotes and printable graphics and maps. This program must be read by the child, even though a help feature offers spoken advice.

Explorapedia, on the other hand, was designed to encourage children of any age to research and explore a topic. Related topics are offered on the same page. If a child is doing a story on wild cats, then the page on lions will also link to cats, cougars, tigers, etc. This program is fun to just sit and play with.

The 1997 Canadian Encyclopedia Plus
From McClelland and Stewart
Requires Windows/Mac
Price $69

Fifth and six graders should start looking in The 1997 Canadian Encyclopedia Plus. Besides the Columbia Encyclopedia for general information, it contains Canadian history, geography, culture, etc. in detail that is difficult to find anywhere other than a large city library. This is a terrific program.

Grammar Games
From Davidson
Requires Windows/Mac
Price $45

Davidson fills the bill with Grammar Games. It does the best it can with an otherwise boring topic. Set in the rainforest, a number of activities test your child's skills. Whenever they are stumped, a Grammar Guide will pop up with help.

I.M. Meen,
Chill Manor
From Simon & Schuster
Requires DOS
Price $69 each

For mostly fun with a little grammar sprinkled in, Simon & Schuster has issued I.M. Meen, which is a Doom look-a-like game but without the violence. It has more than 30 levels of play and three levels of difficulty for Grades 3, 5 and 8. To save the kidnapped children, you must periodically solve grammar puzzles. A grammar book is there to help when needed.

As an extension of this product, Simon & Schuster created Chill Manor to test history skills. In this 3D game, historical facts have been changed and it is your job to set the record straight. It's gaming with a saving grace.

TriplePlay Plus!
From Syracuse Learning Systems
Requires Windows
Price $79

Syracuse Learning Systems have the best French language tutor I have seen for kids this

Continued on page **33**

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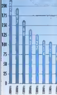

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Software gifts for kids

Continued from page **30**

age. Many products are aimed at travellers but this one reinforces what children are already learning in school. Called TriplePlay Plus!, it injects fun and pizazz into learning French (or Spanish, English, German, Italian, Japanese or Hebrew in separate CD-ROM products). This is the one I bought for my own kids because it was closer to the kind of learning they were doing at school. It includes speech recognition for better pronunciation and expects children to learn to read at the same time they learn to speak.

Paris—History and Splendor

From E M M E
Requires Windows/Mac
Price $60

Teachers will want this CD-ROM from France called Paris—History and Splendor, as a classroom resource. Drawings, maps, and photos tell the city's history from the earliest settlements through to the present sprawling metropolis.

Major League Math
Major League Football

From Sanctuary Woods
Requires Windows/Mac
Price $40 each

For math programs, Major League Math and Major League Football from Sanctuary Woods are the best. In a new format for math software, real-life situations are used to generate math problems. A "coach" is always available to help and teach. Both programs include good simulations of the game that are refreshing. Kids like to "play" these and have a great time learning math.

Adi's Mathematics, English or Science

From Sierra
Requires Windows
Price $69 each

For curriculum-based practice, Sierra's Adi's Mathematics, English or Science for fourth and fifth grades are excellent programs that give a more orderly presentation of material. Sierra games are included with each two-CD-ROM set and are opened by points gained from answering questions.

Children can choose from a list of topics each of which has a number of groups of problems. Help with understanding or learning how to answer questions is always available. (If it says Grade 4, it means the content is equivalent to what your children will be taught in school in Grades 4 or 5, not in Grade 3.)

Mega Math Blaster

From Davidson
Requires: Windows/PowerMac
Price $72

Davidson has issued a two-CD-ROM set called Mega Math Blaster for ages six to 12. It is the same award-winning Math Blaster format that kids have played with for years but contains six difficulty levels in nine different subject areas. Math problems are embedded in five arcade games that make learning fun. Because the type of math questions and difficulty levels may be set to an appropriate age level, this program can grow with your child's expertise.

Logical Journey of the Zoombinis

From Broderbund
Requires Windows/Mac
Price $61

How can math be math but not really look like math? The answer is in the Logical Journey of the Zoombinis from Broderbund. Rather than numbers in columns, math becomes a series of logical questions needed to help the Zoombinis escape their island prison. The practice helps prepare kids for understanding more advanced math concepts such as sequential, logical, statistical thinking, attribute comparison, set theory etc. This program was around last year and will be around next year and the next.

Quarky & Quaysoo's Turbo Science

From Sierra
Requires DOS
Price $20

Gismos and Gadgets

From Learning Company
Requires Dos/Mac
Price $50

For science, there are two older programs that have stood the test of time: Quarky & Quaysoo's Turbo Science and Gismos and Gadgets. The latter involves solving ►

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physics problems to, for example, win a car race. It is simple but the content is excellent and accessible to nine to 12 year olds.

Turbo Science also asks kids to do "scientific analysis" of things in the environment: weighing, checking voltage, setting flaps on a plane, etc. It comes with a large manual called the *Turbo Research Guide* that explains concepts in simple language. Using the lab tools such as a volt meter, light meter, scales and thermometer, children get used to the idea of making measurements and using them to make deductions.

The Invention Studio
From: Discovery Channel
Requires: Windows
Price: $45

The Invention Studio from the Discovery Channel was developed by Music Pen, the same group responsible for The Magic School Bus series for younger children. Music Pen is great at mixing exploration, games and learning on a variety of subjects.

Invention Studio looks a bit like The Incredible Machine in places but the substance is much greater. In one screen, it teaches building a simple circuit diagram between a power source, switch and lamp. Along the way kids learn about circuit diagrams, power flow, how a switch works and more. Other sections start with blue prints and build transport vehicles in 3D images. My favorite section is the junk heap where children are encouraged to recycle found objects into wonderful machines. This program is a winner.

3D Body Adventure
From: Knowledge Adventure
Requires: Windows/Mac
Price: $50

3D Body Adventure from Knowledge Adventure travels through a virtual 3D human body teaching anatomy and systems. There is even a color cross-section scan from head to toe that looks like a cat scan. What sets this program apart from others on anatomy is that it contains games and lets kids "play" doctor in diagnosing diseases using what they have learned in the rest of the program. The best of the body programs.

Keep your kids' holiday cool

BY GEOF WHEELWRIGHT

Ahh, picture the scene. It's a bright Christmas morning, snow is softly piling up outside as your children excitedly rise from their beds to greet the day. The children marvel at the mass of carefully wrapped presents under the tree and begin gently shaking and probing each one that bears their name (and probably a few that don't).

Then comes the magical moment as they unwrap your specially selected present to use with the family's new home computer—the Bubba's Big Prawn Shop 3D set that all your kids have been hankering after ever since you brought the computer home a few weeks ago. So they pop the first CD ROM into the drive and wait for the magic to begin, and wait, and wait.

Seconds turn to minutes as you start battling your way through error messages, reboot requests and increasing cries of frustration from the children surrounding you. "The game doesn't work," you hear them cry. "And it's Christmas Day."

If you don't want this scene repeated at your house on Christmas morning, there are a few things you need to do. The first is to realize that software can be the worst fun killer since the words "batteries not included" were first coined by toy manufacturers.

If your kids want to play with their new Christmas software when they get it, the words "I'm just waiting to get through to the technical support line" will just not wash—especially as the support line will either be closed on Christmas Day or so swamped with calls you'll spend days trying to get through.

Test it first

Just ask any of the thousands who went through this unhappy experience two years ago with a Lion King CD, which turned out to have loading problems that homes all over the United States experienced simultaneously on the big day.

So the first element in any happy Christmas software experience is to try before you wrap. While some kids may appreciate the chance to work their way through endless layers of shrinkwrap before getting to the CD, most will prefer to be confident in the knowledge that Mommy or Daddy has already tested the game and is sure it will work with the family computer's sound card and doesn't require more memory or need additional hard-disk space.

Read the box

Admittedly, many of these problems can also be avoided simply by reading the system specifications on the side of the box before you buy your game—and making sure that any relative who might be planning to give the kids software knows what you have in your system.

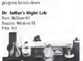
Tune up your PC

You should also make sure that your system is working optimally before trying to load any new software. This includes running a virus check on your hard disk (and any floppies that are inserted into the floppy drive). Viruses have been known to adversely affect the performance of your system and even prevent it from properly loading new software. U

Dinosaur Hunter
From Dorling-Kindersley
Requires Windows
Price $35

Dinosaur Hunter from Dorling-Kindersley provides a nice change of pace In D-K's "multiple media" tradition this disc comes with a pocketbook-sized guide to dinosaurs and a cardboard stegosaur model to build that is 60 to 70 cm long That leads into digging up and assembling skeletons on the computer as an archaeologist would Fifty species are located in the Museum with information about each For even more there is hook up to Dino Online D-K's Internet dinosaur magazine Altogether the best dino program hands-down

Dr Sulfur's Night Lab
From McGraw-Hill
Requires Windows 95
Price $54



McGraw Hill has a new chemistry program out called Dr. Sulfur's Night Lab for nine year olds and up (but most kids will find it too difficult until they are 11 or 12) Dr Sulfur's lab has been ransacked and only young chemists can straighten it all up again by doing hundreds of experiments and solving puzzles.

Everything familiar to a chem lab is here from beakers and funnels to the periodic table and reagents. Mix, pour, and test. This is a big program, so only children with patience need apply

Beyond The Naked Eye
From Corel
Requires Not available at press time
Price Not available at press time

Corel is about to release Beyond The Naked Eye which deals with bacteria and viruses. Kids take on the role of scientists in search of the cause of epidemics that must be identified and prevented from spreading Because the material is presented in a serious fashion (no silly cartoon characters here) it is more suitable to 11 year olds and up The material is good and the lessons learned about real life scientists and the scientific method makes this program a valuable asset.

The Oregon Trail,
The Amazon Trail,
The African Trail
Mayaquest
From The Oregon Trail
Requires Windows/Mac
Price $35 $45 each

The Oregon Trail is now in its 25th year. MECC has changed and revised the old girl but it still stands as a solid edutainment product In the same format they also sell The Amazon Trail, The African Trail and Mayaquest. They cover conservation and natural resources history and archaeology and nature and ecology Any of these are good interactive adventures for kids from nine to well into their teens

Pyramid: Challenge of the Pharoahs' Dream
From McGraw-Hill
Requires Windows
Price $54

McGraw Hill has a new two-CD-ROM game called Pyramid Challenge of the Pharoahs Dream This is a gentle adventure game with puzzles that teach ancient Egyptian culture and history One of the challenges is to build a pyramid with tools of the period, but along the way kids learn to make ale from bread and find true north using the rise and fall of stars in the night sky This game deserves a thumbs up!

How Would You Survive?
From Grolier
Requires Windows/Mac
Price $35

A new product from Grolier is ambitious in its scope How Would You Survive? explores life

Continued on page 50

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A computer for the holidays

BY CHRIS FISHER, STEVE HALINDA, AND TIM BINGHAM WALLIS

Products reviewed

- A-Open
- Apple Performa 6400
- AST Advantage! 9310
- Compucan
- Comtre
- Datwa
- Darius
- Dell Dimension XPS P166
- Express Micro
- INET VX P166-32E
- Micro Infinit
- Mynix
- NEC Ready 9628
- OA COMP
- Packard Bell
- Palnet
- Samtack
- Sirus
- STD
- Sygma VS 5166
- Ultinet

So it's Christmas once again, and many of you considering purchasing a new family computer during the holiday season are beginning to wade into the battlefield that is specifications, options and pricing. This year as we have done in previous years, we take a look at a number of alternatives in the family multimedia PC arena

The components you need and why

Processor

The central processing unit (CPU) is the bit that makes everything happen. Entry level these days is considered to be a Pentium or Power PC at 100 MHz as a minimum. Generally speaking, the faster the clock speed of the chip, measured in megahertz (MHz), the quicker the system. Clock speeds for personal computers are now available at up to 200 MHz. Higher speeds will be available in the near future

Memory

Random access memory (RAM) is just as important to your system's engine as the processor. More sophisticated applications require more RAM.

We recommend a basic system to have at least 16 MB of RAM. Remember adding additional RAM is one of the simplest things to do to a computer, so there is no need to go all out straight away. RAM prices are low at the present time, so it may not be a bad idea to get 32 MB at the time of system purchase

CD ROM

A CD-ROM drive is a necessity these days as most programs are shipped in CD ROM format. The CD ROM is an ideal format for distributing large applications that would otherwise require dozens of diskettes.

The faster the CD-ROM drive, the more quickly data can be accessed. In the last year the standard speed for the entry-level CD-ROM has doubled, from 4x to 8x. While for many applications a 4x CD-ROM drive will service one's requirements quite well, technology has been advancing so quickly that buyers may only be able to find 8x readers.

The principles in choosing a CD-ROM drive are similar to that of a hard drive. You want something with as low an access time as possible, and high transfer rates. An 8x CD-ROM is capable of throughputs of 1,200Kbps (Kilobytes per second) and access times around 150-180 ms (milliseconds). Certainly not as fast as hard drives, but definitely better than the old 2x drives.

Data archiving

No matter how big your hard drive, you are going to run out of space. The solution? Data archiving. There are several storage mechanisms that fit most consumers' budgets.

You can save data on tape, optical discs, or hybrid optical magnetic discs. One of the more intriguing new mechanisms on the market is a PCI card by Becker that lets you save up to 1.5 GB of data on video tape using a regular VHS player. Another very popular device is the Zip drive, which can store up to 100 MB per disc. These new highly portable discs are handy for people who work in more than one place.

Prices are also dropping on CD writers, which will allow you to back up all your valuable data on CD ROM. The advantages are clear: a long shelf life (although just how long is the subject of some debate these days, with reports of de-lamination of some roll-your-own CDs), plenty of storage space per CD, very low cost (about $12 for a blank 650 MB disc) and also the knowledge that no matter where you go, chances are someone will have a plain old CD-ROM drive capable of reading your data. But beware: CD writing is a one-time deal. Once you've filled a CD, there's no going back to erase or rewrite it. (See the November issue of TCP or our Web site for more details on removable storage options.)

Connectivity

A computer can connect you to the world. Most new buyers will want to try their hand on the Internet, bulletin board services, or working from home. For a computer to be connected to any online service, it requires a modem.

Modem technology is evolving at a tremendous pace. The greater the modem's speed, the faster a computer can access information on a remote system, theoretically at least. Most new systems will ship with a 28.8Kbps modem—the bare minimum you should consider.

While slower and cheaper 14.4Kbps modems are still available, they are far too slow for effective use of Internet-oriented applications. Many online services require payment by the hour, so a faster modem can save you money (theoretically at least).

Users who expect to spend a lot of time online at work or at play may want to look into integrated services digital network (ISDN) technology. The home version of this digital technology operates at speeds of up to 128Kbps. However, ISDN users may pay a premium price for their online time.

Video cards

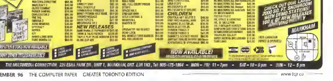
The basic graphics card is a PCI 64-bit model with 1 MB of some type of RAM, be it DRAM, VRAM, EDO or SGRAM. This will suit most peoples' needs, but if you expect to use applications with intense graphics such as games and digital imaging software, you may want to invest in a slightly better video card with 3D rendering, faster processing and additional (and faster) RAM.

Some newer real-time action games need tremendous 3D rendering power and work well with cards from ATI, such as 3D Rage or Matrox's Mystique. Better quality cards may have support for optional television adapters, and will also display full-motion video with greater clarity. It's nice to note the two leading video-card manufacturers are Canadian companies.

Monitors

Chances are your monitor will outlast the rest of your system, so make sure it's a good

Continued on page **38**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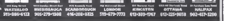

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YOUR PATH OF LEAST RESISTANCE TO THE INTERNET

A computer for the holidays

Continued from page 36

investment. While a 15 inch monitor is adequate for most purposes a 17-inch version will go a long way towards enhancing any user's enjoyment (Check out August issue for a review of the best 17 inch monitors)

However monitors are not all created equally so if you have budgeted a fixed amount, you d be better off with a really good 15-inch monitor than a mediocre 17 incher A large monitor that reproduces images that are fuzzy or fluttered will have you grabbing your spectacles, and bottle of aspirin, in no time.

We recommend you purchase a high-quality product from a name you recognize You ll want something that is not only capable of high-display resolutions but also has a fine dot pitch (0 28 mm or less) and high refresh rates (above 70 Hz at all resolutions.)

Hard drive

Today s applications are large taking up increasingly more of your available space. Some programs and suites can occupy more than 100 MB of your hard disk. A good quality color picture of holiday cheer scanned onto your system could easily occupy up to 50 MB of disk space (big families), and you will need to store this information, at least temporarily, on your hard drive

The 1 GB (gigabyte) of space that comes standard with today's systems is adequate for starters But storage space isn't the only thing that makes a good hard drive. A hard drive with fast access times and high transfer rates can go a long way to improving the overall speed of your system Look for access times around (or below) the 10 ms mark and transfer rates of at least 2 500Kbps

Our tests this month will give you an idea of what's available, and what you can expect to find for x-number of dollars. On the whole, all of the systems tested can certainly be considered complete, and multimedia-capable

Our captives

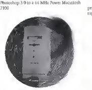
A Open

This is a complete and well-priced system unfortunately, performance was a little lacking due to the use of an Overdrive processor as opposed to a standard Pentium 166 For $2 009 before taxes the system comes equipped with 16 MB of memory, 256KB cache a 1.6 GB hard drive an S3 Trio64 graphics adapter, an Acer 10x CD ROM drive an Acer AW32Pro sound wavetable sound card and a 33 6Kbps Radicom voice/faxmodem The system uses Intel's HX PCI chipset.

Apple Macintosh Performa 6400

microphone, integrated subwoofer speakers that provide exceptional sound quality and an 8x CD-ROM drive.

By including two PCI and a SCSI expansion slot, the 6400 can be easily expanded or upgraded. Buyers looking to replace an aging Mac will notice a vast improvement over their older systems. To see whether the 6400 is worth the price, we compared it using Adobe Photoshop 3.0 to a 66 MHz Power Macintosh 7100.



Operation	PowerMac 7100	Performa 6400
Open 1 MB file	4.6 sec	3.5 sec
Apply Gaussian blur	46.9 sec	28.4 sec
Open 9.4 MB EPS	43.7 sec	12.5 sec
Convert EPS to TIFF	57.8 sec	22.5 sec

Like many of the new multimedia systems, the Performa is visually appealing. If you want a machine that doesn't look out of place in your play room, the 6400 will suit you well. Its curved shell gives this mini tower a graceful appearance.

The only drawback to the system is its lack of RAM. By shipping with only 16 MB of RAM, the system is limited in its ability to run more than one advanced program at a time. However, with the current low RAM prices, the cost of upgrading is minimal. The Macintosh Performa 6400 will retail, without a monitor, for $3,199.

AST Advantage! 9310

The 9310 is one of the most complete, well-rounded systems AST has ever sent us. The Advantage! is loaded with both hardware and software to meet all of your computing demands.

The system comes loaded with 24 MB of EDO RAM, 256K pipeline burst cache, a very fast 2.5 GB hard drive from Western Digital, an 8x CD ROM drive, a 33.6Kbps faxmodem and a SoundBlaster 16 sound card. You'll also get a full-page personal document scanner complete with software that will read documents into your computer for faxing, editing or filing. The only thing we would do to improve this system is swap the S3 video card with 1 MB of RAM for something faster containing at least 2 MB.

AST provides a generous amount of quality software titles, for both home and business use. Titles include Lotus SmartSuite 96, Quicken Special Edition, Groliers Encyclopedia, Microsoft Fury 3, Descent II, Virtual Pool and Internet Explorer. On the business side, you'll receive titles such as Peachtree First Accounting, Quicken Business Law Partner, Turbo Publisher, and a few others.

The system performed well, and is competitively priced at $3,199 with a one-year rapid replacement/repair warranty.

Compucon

The third fastest computer in this month's lineup belongs to Compucon. It managed to achieve a score of 140 on our BAPCo benchmark suite. When a system scores this high on our tests, we immediately get nosy and wonder what makes it tick.

Under the hood, you'll find a slew of quality components: a SoundBlaster 16 Vibra Plug and Play (PnP) sound card, a Creative Labs 8x CD-ROM drive, a Quantum Fireball 1.2 GB hard drive, and a WinFast 3D S600 video card

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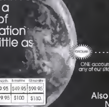

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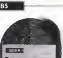
from LeadTek. We first came across one of these video cards two months ago in our Pentium Pro comparison Although that particular model was much more expensive ($2,800) it appears that systems built with these cards tend to perform exceptionally well

Also included in the package are a pair of 80 Watt (W) speakers a subwoofer, and a CommWave 28.8Kbps voice/faxmodem and Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia As usual, the system documentation provided by Compucon is excellent. A very well rounded system definitely worth considering

Comtex

The second lowest-priced computer in our survey Comtex's system is well rounded. The package consists of the standard complement of 256K Level 2 cache, 16 MB of EDO RAM, an S3 video card with the new ViRGE chipset and 2 MB of DRAM on board. Multimedia accessories include a 16-bit sound card from Everex and an Acer 10x CD-ROM drive Hard drive storage comes in the form of a standard 1.2 GB Maxtor unit System performance was average, based on the components used. It sells for $1,799 and comes complete with a three-year warranty

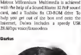


Daiwa

Daiwa has once again provided us with a complete system at a competitive price This time its system features a 166 MHz processor 256K of pipelined cache and 32 MB of EDO RAM. To meet your storage needs the system includes a 2 1 GB Quantum Fireball which not only provides you with adequate storage space, but also gives you speedy access times and high transfer rates to your precious data.

Daiwa decided to go with an ATI 3D Expression for video in this survey Although ATI has a reputation for producing high quality fast video cards our numbers indicate that the fastest systems in our survey achieved their high scores with the help of a Matrox Millennium Multimedia is achieved with the help of a Sound Blaster 32 PnP sound card, and a Toshiba 8x CD-ROM drive To help you get out of the box and onto the Internet, Daiwa includes a speedy USR 28.8Kbps voice/faxmodem

Darius



New contender in our Test Labs Darius computers are distributed by TK IDM Technology Ltd, with offices in Calgary, Vancouver and Toronto If the name sounds familiar, it's probably because you've seen monitors with the same name branded on them.

The system we received for this month's review was feature-rich, driven by a 166 MHz Pentium processor, 512K of pipeline burst cache and 16 MB of EDO RAM The video card is an S3 Trio64 V+ with 2 MB of DRAM on board. Storage space is adequate, with a Fujitsu 1 7 GB hard drive Multimedia components include a Sony 8x CD ROM drive a Sound Blaster 16 sound card and speakers from KOSS Also thrown in is a USR Sportster 33 6Kbps voice/fax/modem with speaker phone

To help you get right down to work, the package includes Corel WordPerfect Suite on CD-ROM and if you wish you can request a

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substitute for Lotus SmartSuite 96 at no extra charge The system performed reasonably well, and has a price of $2 550 with a three year warranty

Dell XPS P166S

Each and every time we review computers Dell sends in a system that ranks with the best of the best in terms of performance in what ever given category we are reviewing This company has truly found the formula for performance and somehow managed to offer the best performance at an attainable price

The system sent in for this month's feature is loaded The little extra performance this system produced came from its use of 32 MB of SDRAM which is faster than the now common-place EDO RAM and yesterday s fast page mode (FPM) variety In fact just about every component on this system is the latest and greatest You get 512K of pipeline burst cache a 2 1 GB Quantum Fireball hard drive, a Matrox Millennium video card with 4 MB of WRAM and the fastest yet CD-ROM drive that we have seen—a 12x

Sound is integrated on the motherboard and Dell ships the system with a set of quality Altec Lansing speakers complete with subwoofer You also get a 15 inch monitor a 33 6Kbps voice/faxmodem, Microsoft Office Professional with Bookshelf and the Windows 95 Plus Pack all for $3,199 There s no doubt in our minds that this is the most desirable system we have looked at for this issue

Express Micro

If you want a computer that has it all in terms of hardware and software, take a close look at this package from Express Micro The system is composed of 32 MB of EDO RAM 512K pipeline cache, a 2 2 GB Quantum hard drive and the new Matrox Mystique 3D accelerator with 2 MB of SGRAM on board

You can play your favorite CDs or games on the Toshiba 8x CD-ROM and SoundBlaster 16-compatible sound card A 33 6Kbps faxmodem is also included for your communication needs complete with software from Cheyenne

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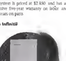
The package is made complete with several high-quality CD-ROM titles like the Microsoft Plus Pack for Windows 95, Mechwarrior 2, Thunder Truck Rally, Scorched Planet, Destruction Derby 2, Compton's New Encyclopedia, Pinball Crystal Callibum, Sceptre VR, USA Today Volume 2, Leonardo, U.S. Atlas 4.0, World Atlas 4.0, Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing, Chessmaster 4000, and the Ultimate Game Pack of 25 various games. Definitely a well-rounded system.

INET VX P166-32E

More new contenders in our Lab Tests, INET computers are distributed by LCF Advanced Technology. The test system was fast, scoring 136 in our benchmark suite. You get 32 MB of EDO RAM, 512K pipeline cache, an ATI 3D Expression video card with 2 MB EDO RAM, a 1.7 GB Quantum Sirocco hard drive, an 8x Toshiba CD-ROM drive, a SoundBlaster 2961 PnP sound card, and a USR 33.6Kbps voice/faxmodem.

Software titles include Microsoft Plus!, Mechwarrior 2, Assault Rings, Quicklink Message Center, Encarta 96, MS Works and Money, MS Scenes, and MS Bob. The complete system is priced at $2,850 and has an impressive five-year warranty on labor and three years on parts.

Micro Infiniti



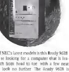
This system has a groundbreaking price. It uses the VX PCIset, has 256K pipeline burst cache, 16 MB EDO memory, a 1.2 GB hard drive, an 8x CD-ROM, an ATI mach 64 with 1 MB and a 33.6Kbps voice/data/faxmodem. Performance on this system is middle of the road but the rock bottom pricing makes it difficult to expect more.

Mynix

This is one of few machines in the survey that uses the new Matrox Mystique video card. The basic components are 32 MB of EDO RAM, 256K of pipeline burst cache and a Seagate 2.1 GB hard drive. The system is completed with a BTC CD-ROM drive, 16-bit sound card and a 28.8Kbps voice/faxmodem.

Each month we have some systems that have problems completing the database section of our BAPCo benchmark, but this is probably more a software than hardware problem. The system from Mynix posted some reasonable results but we were unable to acquire its relative overall system performance because of this problem.

NEC Ready 9628



One of NEC's latest models is this Ready 9628. If you're looking for a computer that is feature-rich from head to toe, with a few neat twists, look no further. The Ready 9628 is loaded with 32 MB of EDO RAM, a large (not to mention very fast) 3.2 GB hard drive from IBM, ATI's new 3D Rage GT with 2 MB of EDO RAM on-board, an 8x CD-ROM drive, 16-bit wavetable surround sound, and a 33.6Kbps voice/faxmodem with caller ID features and remote message retrieval.

On the front of the case, you'll notice NEC's 25 W integrated stereo amplifier and equalizer and a built in 100 MB Iomega Zip drive. Software titles include Microsoft Works, Money, Encarta 96, Publisher, Bookshelf, Mechwarrior 2, Anti Gravity Racing and seven other titles. With a benchmark score of 136, this system ranks among the fastest in this survey. Definitely a worthy candidate for home or business use. Yes, it's more expensive than its competitors in this survey, but considering all you get, we feel it's a great package.

OA COMP

This model uses a Triton II HX PCI set motherboard and comes equipped with 32 MB of EDO RAM, 256K pipeline burst cache, a 2.1GB Western Digital hard drive and a Matrox Mystique video card with 2 MB on board. The system is further enhanced by a Creative Labs SoundBlaster 16 and an 8x CD-ROM, also by Creative Labs. Extras with this computer include a US Robotics 28.8Kbps modem and a Yamaha DB50XG midi daughterboard.

Performance was on the upper end of the scale relative to the other systems tested. The software bundle accompanying this system is somewhat unique among this group of systems, using Corel WordPerfect Suite 7 (Academic Version) as opposed to the standard Microsoft bundle offering.

Continued on page **44**

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Continued from page **42**

Packard Bell

This is perhaps the best computer we've seen from Packard Bell over the last year. Not only is it loaded with options but it also offers performance that rivals that of clone makers. The system comes with 24 MB of EDO RAM, 256K cache, an 8x CD ROM drive, and a Maxtor 2 GB hard drive.

As a wonderful extra, the system comes with a TV board, which allows for television viewing via the computer. It also has a nifty control panel that allows for volume, television, CD player and access to the Internet at the touch of a button. This system, in our opinion, is truly competitive and one of the best we have seen from Packard Bell to date.

Patriot

The system comes with 32 MB EDO memory, 256K of pipeline burst cache, a 1.3 GB Maxtor hard drive and uses a 64-bit S3 PCI video card

with 1 MB of RAM. The system is rounded out with a Goldstar IDE 8x CD-ROM drive and a Jazz 16 sound card complete with SCSI port.

Like the Mynix system discussed earlier, we were unable to get final benchmark results for this system due to an incompatibility with the database section of our benchmarks. The system sells for $2,053 and comes with a two-year warranty.

Samtack

Another system to come in below $2,000, the core components of this machine are 16 MB of EDO RAM, 256K of pipeline burst cache, a 2.1 GB Quantum Fireball hard drive and a Trident 9680 64-bit PCI card with 1 MB of RAM. Other goodies include an 8x Goldstar CD ROM drive, a US Robotics 28.8Kbps voice/data/faxmodem and a 16-bit sound card. Performance, though not stellar, was reasonable given the price.

Sirus

Sirus is known for providing us with fast computers, and this month was no exception. This 166 MHz screamer is lined with only the finest of components. The system uses Intel's 430HX PCI chipset, combined with 512K of pipelined cache. With 32 MB of EDO RAM, your Windows swap file will be kept to a minimum.

Multimedia applications will be very enjoyable thanks to a Pioneer 10x CD-ROM drive and a SoundBlaster 32 wavetable sound card. While all the components we've mentioned so far are high-quality parts, we're certain that the combination of a Matrox Millennium and a 2.1 GB Quantum Fireball are what pushed this system over the edge, finishing with a score of 142 on our BAPCo tests.

Also included in the system are a Supra 33.6Kbps voice/faxmodem and the Microsoft Multimedia CD Bundle, composed of Encarta 96, Money, Works, Golf, and Dangerous Creatures. The system can be yours for $2,699, complete with a two-year warranty.

STD

STD, unlike almost all competitors, has thought to include a joystick with its system, so when set up on Christmas morning, one can settle into putting the system through its paces with some video game action. The system uses the HX PCIset, comes with 16MB of EDO RAM, 512K cache, a 2.1 GB Seagate hard drive, a 8x CD-ROM drive and a 33.6 voice/data/faxmodem.

The video system on the STD is interesting: it uses a 64-bit Cirrus Logic Pixelview combo VTV with 2 MB of EDO RAM. This allows video output to be redirected to a standard television and offers zooming and cap-

Continued on page **48**

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SEAGATE 3.5" E-IDE 2.5GB 11ms 164k 5400RPM	$410
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	A-Open	AST Advantage! 9310	Compucon	Comtex	Daiwa	Darius	Dell Dimension XPS P166	Express Micro	INET VX P166-32E	Micro Infiniti
Processor (MHz)	Pentium 166	Pentium 166	Pentium 166	Pentium 166	Pentium 166	Pentium 166	Pentium 166	Pentium 166	Pentium 166	Pentium 166
Cache	256K pipeline	256K pipeline	256K pipeline	256K pipeline	256K pipeline	512K pipeline	512K pipeline	512K pipeline	512K pipeline	256K pipeline
RAM	32 MB	24 MB EDO	32 MB EDO	16 MB EDO	32 MB EDO	16 MB EDO	32 MB SDRAM	32 MB EDO	32 MB EDO	16 MB EDO
Video card	S3 Trio64	S3 Trio64	WinFast 3D S600	S3 ViRGE	ATI 3D Expression	S3 Trio64	Matrox Millennium	Matrox Mystique	ATI 3D Expression	ATI Mach 64
Video memory	1 MB DRAM	1 MB DRAM	2 MB EDO	2 MB DRAM	2 MB EDO	2 MB DRAM	4 MB WRAM	2 MB SGRAM	2 MB EDO	1 MB DRAM
Monitor	None	None	None	None	None	None	15-inch	None	None	None
Sound card	Acer AW32Pro	SB-16 compat.	SoundBlaster-16	Ensoniq 16-bit	SoundBlaster-32	SoundBlaster-16	SoundBlaster-16	ESS1688	SoundBlaster-16	None
Hard drive	Western Digital 1.6 GB EIDE	Western Digital 2.5 GB EIDE	Quantum Fireball 1.2 GB EIDE	Maxtor 1.2 GB EIDE	Quantum Fireball 2.1 GB EIDE	Fujitsu 1.7 GB EIDE	Quantum Fireball 2.1 GB EIDE	Quantum Fireball 2.1 GB EIDE	Quantum Sirocco 1.7 GB EIDE	JTS Palladium 1.2 GB EIDE
CD-ROM drive	Acer 10x	Toshiba 8x	Panasonic 8x	Acer 10x	Toshiba 8x	Sony 8x	10x	Toshiba 8x	Toshiba 8x	Panasonic 8x
System BIOS	AMI	AST	Award	AMI	Award	Award	AMI	AMI	Award	Award
Plug and Play support	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Operating system	Windows 95	Windows 95	Windows 95	Windows 95	Windows 95	Windows 95	Windows 95	Windows 95	Windows 95	Windows 95
Extras	Radicom 28.8Kbps faxmodem, speakers	33.6Kbps faxmodem page scanner speakers	28.8Kbps faxmodem, speakers	33.6Kbps faxmodem speakers	USR 28.8Kbps faxmodem	USR 33.6Kbps faxmodem speakers	33.6Kbps faxmodem, speakers	Digicom 33.6Kbps faxmodem speakers	USR 33.6Kbps faxmodem, speakers	33.6Kbps faxmodem
BAPCo benchmarks										
Desktop publishing	121	108	121	108	107	147	132	138	127	114
Desktop graphics	136	133	145	134	113	128	141	115	148	140
Desktop presentation	32	130	147	117	119	115	147	110	138	121
Word processing	131	121	136	108	112	108	143	108	136	114
Spreadsheet	109	120	138	130	108	130	148	142	132	122
Database	123	122	134	108	108	114	141	108	134	117
Sysmark32	93	126	140	117	111	117	145	118	108	118
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Processor (MHz)	Pentium 180	Pentium 166	Pentium 180	Pentium 166	Pentium 166	Pentium 166	Pentium 166	Pentium 166	Pentium 166	Pentium 166
Cache	256K pipeline	256K	256K pipeline	256K pipeline	256K pipeline	256K pipeline	512K pipeline	512K pipeline	256K pipeline	512K pipeline
RAM	16 MB EDO	32 MB EDO	32 MB EDO	24 MB EDO	16 MB EDO	16 MB EDO	32 MB EDO	16 MB EDO	32 MB EDO	32 MB EDO
Video card	Matrox Mystique	ATI Rage GT	Matrox Mystique	S3 VIRGE	S3 Trio64	Trident 9680	Matrox Millennium	Cirrus Logic 5446	Matrox Millennium	Tseng ET6000
Video memory	2 MB SGRAM	2 MB EDO	2 MB SGRAM	2 MB DRAM	1 MB DRAM	1 MB DRAM	2 MB WRAM	2 MB EDO	2 MB WRAM	2 MB MDRAM
Monitor	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None
Sound card	ESS1868	SB-16 compat.	SoundBlaster 16	SB-16 compat.	Jazz 16	Pine 16-bit	SoundBlaster-32	SoundBlaster-32	SoundBlaster-32	Yamaha 711
Hard drive	Seagate 2.1 GB EIDE	IBM 3.2 GB EIDE	Western Digital 2.1 GB EIDE	Maxtor 2.0 GB EIDE	Maxtor 1.3 GB EIDE	Quantum Fireball 2.1 GB EIDE	Quantum Fireball 2.1 GB EIDE	Seagate 2.1 GB EIDE	Western Digital 2.5 GB EIDE	NEC 2.5 GB EIDE
CD-ROM drive	BTC 8x	NEC 8x	Creative Labs 8x	NEC 8x	Goldstar 8x	Goldstar 8x	Pioneer 10x	Panasonic 8x	Acer 10x	Hitachi 8x
System BIOS	Award	Phoenix	Award	AMI	Award	Award	Award	AMI	Award	Award
Plug and Play support	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Operating system	Windows 95	Windows 95	Windows 95	Windows 95	Windows 95	Windows 95	Windows 95	Windows 95	Windows 95	None
Extras	Wescom 28.8Kbps faxmodem, speakers	33.6Kbps faxmodem, Iomega 100 MB Zip, speakers	USR 28.8Kbps faxmodem, MIDI daughterboard	33.6Kbps faxmodem, TV tuner, speakers	Speakers	USR 28.8Kbps faxmodem speakers	Supra 28.8Kbps faxmodem speakers	Supra 33.6Kbps faxmodem, TV output speakers	USR 33.6Kbps faxmodem speakers	Maxi 33.6Kbps fax modem 16 MB caching controller speakers
BAPCo Benchmarks										
Desktop publishing	110	129	117	107	100	114	136	113	146	129
Desktop graphics	125	173	133	131	138	103	132	121	137	138
Desktop presentation	122	139	135	124	112	125	148	123	143	145
Word processing	115	132	130	122	106	118	145	114	122	129
Spreadsheet	153	138	137	126	118	114	141	131	133	114
Database	N/A	128	133	113	N/A	116	135	117	130	134
Sysmark32	N/A	130	133	123	N/A	117	142	121	137	130
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A computer for the holidays

Continued from page 44

ture capabilities This is a well-priced package that comes complete with a good assortment of quality CD titles

Sygma VS 5166

This system from Sygma managed to rank in the top five of this month s machines. The system contains 32 MB of EDO RAM, the standard complement of 256K pipeline cache a Matrox Millennium video card with 2 MB of WRAM on-board, a 2 5 GB hard drive from Western Digital an Acer 10x CD-ROM drive a SoundBlaster 32 wavetable sound card and a USR 33 6Kbps voice/faxmodem The system is priced at $2 598 with a two-year warranty

Ultinet

This system came equipped with all the standard items: 32 MB of EDO RAM, 512k of pipeline burst cache a Tseng Labs ET6000 video card with 2 MB an NEC 2 5 GB hard drive a Hitachi 8x CD-ROM drive a Blazer 33 6Kbps voice/faxmodem and a Yamaha wavetable sound card The system also came with a caching hard drive controller equipped with 16 MB of RAM

The system performed well on benchmark testing but given the inclusion of a 16 MB caching controller not as well as expected Unfortunately the controller did not come with the drivers to enable Windows 95 to take good advantage of it In fact the device left Windows 95 running the hard drive system in MS-DOS compatibility mode and unable to use several of its disk utilities

BENCHMARK TESTS
COMPUTER PAPER
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Software gifts for kids

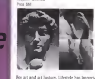
Continued from page 35

In the times of ancient Egyptians Vikings and Aztecs. This is a history course for kids on everything from metalworking to burial rites Cultures may be cross compared. Includes multimedia pictures, maps text and "movies" Enough information to make schools rush out and buy it.

New World Explorers
From Softkey
Requires Windows/Mac
Price $53

In the same vein but on a simpler level, Softkey's New World Explorers combines text links for explorers Including numerous Canadian ones, with interactive trips with three famous explorers Along the way kids learn about navigation tools what new world indigenous peoples in Mexico were like and what life was like for Europeans entering the "New World."

Michelangelo Day by Day
From Lifestyle Software
Requires Windows
Price $61



For art and art history, Lifestyle has imported an absolutely delightful CD-ROM from Italy called Michelangelo Day by Day A chronological history of his art from boyhood until death is told with audio and wonderful colorful drawing reminiscent of Richard Scarry's books Links are provided to photos of the artist's work in the appropriate sequence The ceiling of the Sistine Chapel may be explored section by section This is by far the best art history title for children on the market.

Gifts for your school

For schools, there are a couple of science programs worthy of note Micro-intel in Montreal has a simple but content-packed program called Biomes and Natural Cycles (Windows/Mac; $49) that would be appropriate for school projects Indeed, Ontario's Ministry of Education has purchased 6,000 copies

Another series that will make librarians, teachers, and kids smile is the Junior Nature Guides collection. Insects (Windows/Mac, $39) comes with an interactive CD-ROM and a 75-page book filled with information. They also offer two similar titles Amphibians & Reptiles and Birds. This disc teaches about habitats and conservation as well as everything you want to know about bugs. As a bonus there are also printable activity sheets with dozens of projects using simple materials. These are a terrific, unique concept

Sometimes smaller companies come by and pull the rug out from underneath the mega corporations Integrated Communications and Entertainment of Toronto has done just that The company now offers nearly a bookshelf full of wonderful social science titles. ❑

Beethoven Lives Upstairs
From BMG
Requires Windows
Price $50

Another unique program is Beethoven Lives Upstairs Here is another product programmed by Music Pen and the quality of their work shows It teaches about instruments, and reading and playing music in a series of wonderful musical games hosted by Beethoven

The Family Music Centre
From Midisoft
Requires Windows
Price $300

Midisoft will help you turn your computer into a piano teacher, keyboard and sound system for more music fun The Family Music Centre comes with a full-sized midi keyboard that connects directly to your computer's sound card The keyboard comes with Midisoft Play Piano 2 0 and Midisoft Studio 4 0 software, and a video cassette that demonstrates the easy set up

The programs allow kids and adults to learn to play the piano and create and record their own music Use it alone if it is impossible to drive across town for 5 p m music lessons or to reinforce what is learned in traditional piano lessons. ❑

Contacts:

Many of the following WEB sites provide product requirements demos or a direct-ordering service Knowledge Adventure even offers activities for children online An additional Canadian children's Web site on children's literature that is worthy of note is: http://www ucalgary ca 80/ dkbrown

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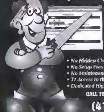

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THE TEEN SOFTWARE MARKET GROWS UP

Non-juvenile programs for adolescents

BY JEAN ALLEN IKESON

Until recently, high school students have been ignored almost entirely by educational software developers. They're too smart for math programs that involve shooting Martians, and they already know how to read. But the idea of devoting their free time to word processing and spreadsheet software sets teenage eyes rolling.

From the kids' point of view entertainment, clothes sex, friends and cars (a.k.a. freedom) all rate at least equally with academic achievement.

However, the two common parental priorities for our children as they near the end of the tunnel called legal age are to stay in school or get a job. We want to stimulate their love of learning and career ambitious, not encourage them to make the *Guiness Book of World Records* for the most consecutive days of sleep.

Finally, software developers have figured out how to bridge the gap between teen desires and parental needs. They are learning how to please both the users and the people who write the cheques for software.

Learning can be fun

Some software for teens still targets high achievers—something that more and more kids are becoming as they see the results of companies "downsizing" all around them. Several new titles are making the kids' serious interests fun.

Emergency Room
District Attorney, Pursuit of Justice
From: Legacy Software (distributed by IBM)
Requires: DOS, CD-ROM drive
Price: $65 each

Emergency Room is the first effort in a series of CD-ROMs to use "RealPlay" technology. The software is a role-playing game in which players try to be so good at assessing, diagnosing and treating emergency room patients that they become chief of staff. Each patient becomes more difficult to diagnose and treat. The traumas are fairly realistic as are the medical procedures, tests and tools. Unexpected videos pop up with funny diversions when players can't find their way to the treatment room.

Despite the amusing elements this program is no lightweight. High school or university students with aspirations of studying medicine will love it. And along the way they will learn terminology, anatomy and, most importantly, problem solving and the importance of documenting their findings. To help them the CME (or continuing medical education) computer is always handy.

IBM
Emergency Room

The second CD-ROM being created for the role-playing series is District Attorney: Pursuit of Justice. This disc offers full-action videos involving more than 50 actors. The game pits the player, a prosecutor against a team of high priced defence lawyers in six cases involving robbery, murder drugs, conspiracy and extortion. The game spans pre-trial gathering of evidence and testimony to the actual court case. An extensive database contains relevant law, a penal code directory, law library crime lab and a coroner's office.

So for all mothers who want their children to grow up to be doctors or lawyers these are ideal Christmas gifts.

Connections
From: Discovery Channel Multimedia
Requires: Windows/Mac, CD ROM drive
Price: $65

Another brain teaser. Connections is based on the television program of the same name that is hosted by British science guru James Burke and has been broadcast by various educational channels. Burke reappears in this puzzle/adventure game to guide the action through a surreal landscape with five levels of play. The goal is to save the universe by discovering hidden links and "connections" in history.

Burke immerses the player in his obsession the relation between technology and society. To test this program, t

Continued on page **55**

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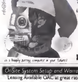

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The teen software market

Continued from page **52**

shanghaied a bright Grade 10 boy who wants to major in history as a guinea pig. He was enthralled with Connections. It took him most of the evening to complete level one, so it should provide many hours of challenge to complete all five.

Savage
From: Discovery Channel Multimedia
Requires: Windows, CD-ROM drive
Price: $55

For teens who are less cerebral Discovery has another CD called Savage which takes place in the Serengeti, in Africa. No, it's not just another PBS nature program. Rather than merely watching lions stalk their prey, players become the lion and learn to stalk, kill, feed or protect to survive as a predator. The game progresses through the 10 stages of a lion's life, from cub-hood to leader of the pride.

The game is set in a 3D virtual environment. Success depends on keeping a watchful eye over one's territory and navigating the terrain. Threats to survival include game poachers, tourists, other animals and Maasai warriors. There is some gore involved, but unlike Doom type games where enemies are blown away, in Savage it is part of a natural order.

Maurice Ashley Teaches Chess
From: Simon & Schuster/Davidson
Requires: Windows
Price: $52

If the African plains aren't your cup of tea, then be safe and buy your teen Maurice Ashley Teaches Chess for the holidays. Ashley will shake them out of their lethargy and open a door to the ultimate strategy game: chess. He artfully but enthusiastically, teaches the game using sports metaphors. It would be difficult not to be intrigued by chess after a session with this disc. It is simply one of the best "learning" programs available on any topic.

Thin field

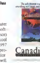
Mixing learning with entertainment value is a common element of titles for children under 12, but the field of "edutainment" CD-ROMs is pretty thin for high school students. Programs are either for a cross section of ages or have a strictly educational focus even though they may be well designed and interesting. For reviews of software aimed at a cross-section of ages that might also intrigue high schoolers, see the Christmas wish list for "grownups" in this issue.

Reference Software

If your teen has academic interests, needs some extra tutoring, or fancies life as an architect, engineer or rock star, then read on. What follows may also appeal to high school teachers and librarians who look longingly at the bushels of software available to primary school children. Take heart, the oasis is growing larger by the minute.

1997 Canadian Encyclopedia Plus
From: McClelland & Stewart
Requires: Windows/Mac, CD-ROM drive
Price: $69

If you've recently purchased a computer and are wondering what items of software (other than a good word processor) are essential for middle and high school kids, then go out and buy the 1997 Canadian Encyclopedia Plus. This program is the first place to look for information on anything Canadian and will prove invaluable for school reports in Canadian geography and social sciences.



Besides a myriad of Canadian topics (try the Canadiana Quiz to find out how little you really know about this great country), the disc also contains the Columbia

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Encyclopedia, Gage Canadian Dictionary, Roget's Electronic Thesaurus, French-English/English-French dictionaries, *Maclean's* Year in Review, specially commissioned interactive maps of Canada and monthly Internet updates.

The program's SmartSearch search engine is the best I have seen. Simply type in a word, phrase or a complete sentence and bingo!, up comes a choice of answers. Material and pictures may be copied and pasted or printed into research reports.

Compton's Interactive World Atlas
From Compton's
Requires Windows 3.1/95 CD-ROM drive
Price $55

Microsoft Encarta 97
From Microsoft
Requires Windows 95 Price: $70

When teens need a world atlas, there are two choices that are worthy of note: Compton's Interactive World Atlas 1997 edition and Microsoft's Encarta97 World Atlas. The latter is laid out like Microsoft's Encarta encyclopedia so you have to do a little searching to find what you want. But there is a myriad of geographical and statistical information.

Compton's is more straightforward to use, with menus always available. School libraries will like the animated "movies" of subjects such as weather phenomena.

Both discs will give you detailed satellite maps and country maps, statistical data and articles on each country. You are also treated to the sights and sounds of each country with photos, videos and audio recordings.

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Graphics

CorelDraw 3, 4, 5
From Corel
Requires Windows
Price varies

Learning CorelDraw 4 (or 5)
From Corel
Requires Windows
Price $25 each

Corel Corp. has been at the forefront of professional "draw" and image-manipulation programs for the PC for years. Just when you think it can't get any better, the Ottawa-based company trots out a new version of CorelDraw.

But rather than turn the low end over to other companies remarketing a look alike of an older version, Corel sells old versions of the software at a significant discount, creating a gold mine for home and student users. I have seen CorelDraw 3 for as little as $60, Version 4 for $100 and Version 5 for $160. Any of these products equals quality and makes a great vehicle for scanning and cleaning up drawings or photos on the computer, pixel by pixel.

If you are daunted by the sheer size of the product, then Corel will happily sell you a tutorial called Learning CorelDraw 4 or Learning CorelDraw 5, both of which are on CD and will rapidly diminish the learning curve and are equivalent to two full days in a classroom.

French

En Quete
From Micro-Intel
Requires Windows/Mac
Price $65

High school students either love it or dread it but in most provinces they are required to study French. If your teen falls into the first category, then he or she will love one of a new series of three CDs (each a different level of difficulty) from Montreal's Micro-Intel called En Quête. This is a role playing game that begins in Paris and proceeds across Canada. It is in French and was designed to sharpen French language skills while being fun.

The cartoon-like graphics are great. A high-school student must track down fellow students from an exchange program in France. Each has unwittingly come home with a microchip given to them by the innkeeper, who happens to be a spy.

To free his French teacher, who is being held by the spy ring, the central character must retrieve all the microchips by travelling across Canada to find classmates by using listening, reading and writing skills. The program is a lively alternative to most CD-ROM French programs designed for tourists.

Continued on page 58

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The teen software market

Continued from page ***56***

Learn to Speak French 6.0

From: The Learning Co.
Requires: Windows/Mac CD-ROM drive sound card, microphone
Price: $139.95

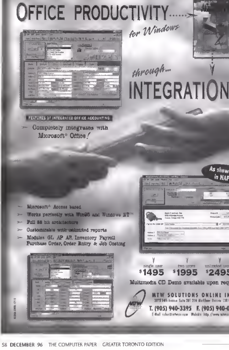
SPEAK
FRENCH

Now that I have maligned the language programs for tourists I should say that The Learning Co produces one of the exceptions It is, in my opinion the best of the lot Learn to Speak French 6.0 is a very sophisticated full-featured program that comes on two CD-ROMs and represents the new wave of language software

The hottest feature is speech recognition. With a microphone connected to your sound card you simply speak into the computer and it understands evaluates and helps you sharpen your pronunciation In one area of the program, it shows a diagram of how your tongue and mouth should move with a sound

And if that is not enough It then shows a video of someone saying the sound Then you practice And practice When you are tired of that then comes the grammar More practice On top of that, there is more than one hour of QuickTime movies of native French "actors" who help develop your conversational skills in context.

Getting bored? The interactive games will help liven up your practice of comprehension grammar and writing skills If this program doesn't bring your high schooler up to speed, there is only one solution left: send them to Quebec for the summer and hope they find a francophone boyfriend or girlfriend Necessity is the mother of invention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French (or Spanish)

From: Pro One
Requires: Windows CD-ROM drive
Price: $50 each

For a straightforward tutorial designed specifically for high school students, try Pro One's French It covers vocabulary, pronunciation sentence structure grammar and reading and listening comprehension. You won t find glitz here except for video coaching sequences on a variety of topics including pronunciation. However, the company does boast that its program covers four years of high school French or two full years of university level French

This four-CD-ROM package is available for about the same price as a couple of hours of private tutoring And the program is aimed at academic French rather than the usual fare trotted out for tourists The pronunciation section is all done by native French speakers. A similar product is also available for Spanish called, of course, Spanish.

History

Focus! Illuminating the Story of Projection

From: Micro-Intel
Requires: Windows/Mac CD-ROM drive
Price: $79

ILLUMINATING THE STORY OF PROJECTION
From the Magic Lantern to IMAX

Focus Illuminating the Story of Projection, is another program from Micro Intel—a company that probably thinks Silicon Valley is a place where glass is manufactured and just does its own thing.

And it does it well with a number of unique programs that high schools will learn to love Who else would attempt a history of cinema from the magic lantern to IMAX that is not just a superficial glimpse with Hollywood as the central figure?

The many European film innovators and inventions are recognized here and given their proper place in the history of the moving picture Included are sections featuring audio and video clips and more detailed text portions on projectors projection film, sound theatres inventors, companies and equipment and processes. Both the technical aspects of projection and the history are thoroughly covered

Continued on page ***61***

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Acer 56e 15" 1280 x 1024	$445
Sony sf2 15" 1280 x 1024	$675
Sony SX 15" 1280 x 1024	$585
Viewsonic 15ES 1024 x 768	$525
Viewsonic 17GS 1280 x 1024	$825
Viewsonic PT770 1280 x 1024	$1250
MAG DX17F5 1280 x 1024	$895
NEC M700 1280 x 1024	$1150
NEC XV17 1280 x 1024	$1150
Datatrain DC530P 14" 1024 x 768	$335
Datatrain DC605 15" 1024 x 768	$445
Datatrain DC625 15" 1024 x 768	$499
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Datatrain DC710 17" 1280 x 1024	$895

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Eagle NE2000 Combo	$120
SMC Ether EZ ISA TP	$79
SMC Ether EZ ISA Combo	$145
SMC Ether Power PCI Combo	$180
3COM ISA TP	$119
3COM ISA Combo	$145
3COM PCI Combo	$159
3COM PCI 10/100BT TP	$165
3COM PCMCIA 10BT TP	$185
D-Link ISA Combo	$89
D-Link 5 Port Hub	$160
D-Link 8 Port Hub	$240
3COM 8 Port Hub	$235
Anton 16 Port Hub	$240
SVC 16 Port Hub	$425

PRINTERS

Canon BJ-30, Portable	$315
Canon BJC 240 Color	$260
Canon BJC 70 Portable Color	$445
Canon BJC-4100 Color	$319
Canon BJC-4550 Color	$639
Epson Stylus 500 Color 720 dpi	$379
HP340 Portable	$449
HP600 4 PPM Color upgradable	$260
HP680C 5 PPM Color ready	$395
HP820Cse 5 PPM Color ready	$559
HP870Cxi 4 PPM 600 x 300 dpi Color	$699
HP6L 4 PPM Laser	$666
HP5P 6 PPM Laser	$1075
HP5 12 PPM Laser	$1795
HP5M 12 PPM Laser	$2695
Raven RP 900	$399

FAX/MODEMS

	Int.	Ext.
USRobotics 33.6 Reg	$225	$249
USRobotics 33.6 Voice	$249	$275
Supra 33.6 Voice	$159	$220
Motorola ISDN BitSurfr-Pro		$450
Xircom Ethernet 28.8 PCMCIA Modem/Fax		$475
Megahertz 28.8 PCMCIA Modem/Fax		$319

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16 bits stereo 3D sound card, **DOWA 80W** Speakers
Keytronic KT2008 104 keys Windows keyboard
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Control Low Radiation SVGA color monitor
Logitech Mouse with pad
Preload **Windows 95** with manuals & CD Disc
GVC/USR 28.8 internal windows fax **modem**
One month **unlimited** access of **Internet**
2 years labour & 1 year parts depot warranty

Pentium 120..$1959.-
Pentium 133..$2039.-
Pentium 150..$2129.-
Pentium 166..$2269.-

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Family Multimedia

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1) *Microsoft Encarta 96 (Encyclopedia)*
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3) *Microsoft Money v4*
4) *Microsoft [illegible]*
5) *Microsoft Golf v2*
6) *Microsoft Entertainment Pack*
[illegible] CD Sampler

Pentium 120..$1769.-
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Intel Triton II (430VX) chipset motherboard
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Pentium 166..$3179.
Pent.Pro 180. $3599.
Pent.Pro 200. $4349.

10X CD ROM

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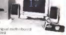

Pentium use **ASUS T2P4 Intel Triton III (430HX)** chipset motherboard with **512K Pipeline** cache
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Keytronic KT2000 104 keys Windows keyboard
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1 Meg PCI Super VGA video card
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9 months parts & labour warranty

Pentium 133	$ 615
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8 Meg to 16 Meg RAM EDO	+ $ 65
8 Meg to 32 Meg RAM EDO	+ $ 176

**** All prices are already 3% discounted for cash Money Order and Certified Cheque (pre-approve only) or Direct payment (Interac). VISA, Master Cards or Government P.O are on regular prices (Regular price = Cash discounted price + 3%). Government educational institutions & corporate P.O are welcome. shipping cost is extra. Prices are subject to change without notice**

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IDE Maxtor 2.7GB	$ 430
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IDE Quantum Fireball 2.1GB	$ 339
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SCSI Quantum Atlas 4.3GB	$1299
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HP Ext 800M Par. tape drive	$ 243
Conner Int 3GB tape drive	$ 325
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HP Int T4000S 8GB scsi tape drive	515
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Panasonic 3 1/2 1.44M	$ 30
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SCSI Adaptec 2940 (bulk)	$ 209
SCSI Adaptec 2940 PCI kit	$ 300

CPU CHIPS

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Cooling Fan for Pentium	
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Intel Pentium 133 CPU (Call)	$ 300
Intel Pentium 150 CPU (Call)	$ 385
Intel Pentium 166 CPU (Call)	$ 505
Intel Pentium 200 CPU (Call)	$ 740
Intel Pentium Pro 180 CPU	$ 750

MOTHERBOARDS

All PCI motherboards come with Enhanced IDE & two 16550 serial

Pentium 256K Pipeline cache motherboard only (Triton 430FX)	$ 144
Pentium 256K Pipeline cache motherboard only (Triton 2 430VX)	$ 152
Pentium 256K Pipeline cache motherboard only (ASUS Triton 3)	$ 220
Pentium 100 256K (430VX)	$ 343
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Pentium 133 256K (430VX)	$ 449
Pentium 150 256K (430VX)	$ 540
Pentium 166 256K (430VX)	$ 660
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CL VGA card 1 M (SOJ 2 pieces)	25
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SIMM 4M 70 72 pins Parity	$ 59
SIMM 8M 70 72 pins (2 sides)	$ 58
SIMM 8M-60 72 pins EDO	$ 58
SIMM 8M 70 72 pins Parity	$110
SIMM 16M-60 70 72pins	$120
SIMM 16M-60 72pins EDO	$120
SIMM 16M-60 168 pins EDO	$135
SIMM 16M 70 72pins Parity	$209
SIMM 32M-60 72pins	$235
SIMM 32M-60 72pins EDO	$235

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Panasonic 8X IDE CD ROM $188
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Creative Technology 16 bits stereo sound card & **Amplified** speakers

Pioneer 10X IDE CD ROM $333
Sound Blaster 32 IDE sound card &
DOWA 80W speaker system

CD ROM

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Toshiba int **8X** IDE 160ms 256K	$ 146
NEC int 4X SCSI 145ms 256K	$ 128
Sony int **8X** IDE 160ms 128K	$ 140
Pioneer int 10X IDE 150ms 128K	$ 160
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Sony int 9423 CD Writer	$ 760
HP int 4020i CD Writer w/card	835

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SIGN-NOTE 180W [illegible] system	99

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Canon BJC 4100 Color	$ 295
Canon BJC-4550 Color 11 x17"	$ 575
HP DeskJet 400 with Color	$ 276
HP DeskJet 600C Color	$ 295
HP DeskJet 680C Color	$ 3[illegible]
HP DeskJet 820Cxi (Windows Only)	$[illegible]
HP DeskJet 870Cxi Color	$ 6[illegible]
HP DeskJet 1600C Color	$1870

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HP 5L 4ppm 1M 600dpi after rebate $615	665
HP 5L + extra HP Toner ("Special" Total 2 Toner cartridges)	$ 715
HP 6P 8ppm 2M 600dpi **"New"**	1039
HP 6MP 8ppm 3M 600dpi **"New"**	1299
HP 5 12ppm 4M 600dpi	$1767
HP 5N 12ppm 4M 600dpi	$2109
HP 5M 12ppm 4M 600dpi	$2419
Raven LS-6 6ppm 1200x600dpi	495

PRINTER ACCESSORIES

4 Meg HP 4+/4M+/4P/4MP/5P	$ 82
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4 Meg HP 5L	$ 170
8 Meg HP 4+/4M+/4P/4MP/5P	$ 139
8 Meg HP 4/4Si/5Si/1200	$ 175
8 Meg HP 5L	$ 242
Canon BJC4100 small color ink	$ 26
Canon BJC210 Black/Color Ink	$ 39
HP Toner for 4/4m/4+/4m+	$ 149
HP Toner for 4L/4P/4MP	$ 99
HP Toner for 5L Special	$ 84
HP Toner for 5P/5MP	$ 120
HP DeskJet ink storage box	$ 8
HP DeskJet Black 51626A	$ 40
HP 600C Black/Color Ink Cart	$ 42
HP DJ [illegible] 51641A	$ 42
Oki 400/800/400e/410e Toner	$ 43
Pana 4400/Raven 410 Toner	$ 43
Pana 4410/Raven 510 Toner	$ 49
Raven LS 5 LS-6 Toner	$ 48
Raven LP410 Drum KXPDM6	$ 142
Raven LP510 Drum KXPDM5	$ 162

INPUT DEVICES

BTC/Mitsumi 104 keys	$ [illegible]
Keytronic E03600 104 keys	$ 33
Microsoft Natural Keyboard	$ [illegible]
Sandwell C5123 joystick	$ 25
Microsoft SideWinder standard joystick	50
Microsoft SideWinder 3D Pro joystick with Hellbender CD-ROM game	118
Mitsumi mouse MS compatible	$ 13
Mitsumi PS/2 mouse	$ 25
Microsoft mouse v2.0	$ 33
Logitech Serial mouse	$ 25

VIDEO CARDS

Cirrus Logic/Trident ISA 1M	$ [illegible]
Cirrus Logic 5434 PCI 1M	$ 44
Cirrus Logic 5446 PCI 1M	$ 67
S3 TRIO 64V PCI 1M	$ 54
ATI Mach 32 VESA 2M	$ 115
ATI Mach 64 VESA 2M	$ 165
Trident 9440 VESA 1M	$ 59
ATI Mach 64 DRAM 1M/2M PCI	85/95
ATI Video Boost 2M PCI EDO	117
ATI TV tuner for Video/3D Xpr	$ 130
ATI 3D Xpression +2M PCI EDO	$ [illegible]
ATI 3D Xpr **PC2TV** 2M PCI (bulk)	$ 184
ATI 3D Xpr **PC2TV** 2M PCI (retail)	$ 215
ATI 3D Xpr **PC2TV** 4M PCI (retail)	$ 2[illegible]
ATI WinTurbo 2M PCI VRAM (bulk)	228
Matrox Millennium PCI 2M (retail)	24[illegible]
Matrox Mystique PCI 2M (retail)	232
Matrox Millennium PCI 4M (retail)	345

MONITORS

14" Acer .28 NI 1024	$ 290
14 Daytek .28 NI 1024	$ 295
15" GVC 1280 .28 Digital	$ 413
15 Samsung GLe 1024 .28	$ [illegible]
15 Samsung [illegible] 1280 .28	$ [illegible]
15 Sony 15SX1 1280 .25	$ 539
15 Sony 15SF2 1280 .25	$ 628
15 Viewsonic 15GS 1280 .28	$ 539
17 Daytek 1731 1280 .28	$ 725
17 Samsung GLi 1280 .28	$ 880
17 Samsung GLs 1600 .26	$1060
17 Sony SF2 1280 .25	$1135
17 Sony SE2T 1600 .25	$1375
17 Viewsonic 17EA 1280 .28	$ 849
17 Viewsonic 17PS 1600 .26	$1019
20 Samsung GLs 1600 .28	$1845

FAX MODEMS

GVC 28.8 Int v34	$ 133
GVC 28.8 Int v34 with Voice (Box)	$ 142
GVC 28.8 Ext v34 with Voice (Box)	$ 159
USR 28.8 Int v34 (Bulk windows)	$ 130
USR 28.8 Int v34 (Box windows)	$ 160
USR 28.8 Int v34 (Bulk)	$ 169
USR 28.8 Int v34 (Box)	$ 202
USR 28.8 Ext v34 (Box)	$ 218
USR 28.8 Int v34 (speakerphone Bulk)	186
USR 28.8 Int v34 (speakerphone Box)	219
USR 28.8 Ext v34 (speakerphone Box)	249
USR 28.8 Int v34 V & DSVD (Box)	145
USR ISDN Internal 128Kb/s	$ 410

NETWORKS

GVC 16 bits ethernet card PnP	$ 59
GVC 32 bits PCI ethernet card	99
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Ethernet Cable 10 Base T, FT4	0.48/ft
Ethernet Cable 100 Base T FT6	1.00/ft
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APC Back-UPS Pro 1400	$ 690

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LANPAK v6.0 4 users	$ 368

The teen software market

Continued from page 58

The Age of Balloons

From Micro-Intel
Requires Windows/Mac CD ROM drive
Price $75

Another soon to be released Micro-Intel title The Age of Balloons begins in 1783 in France with the Montgolfier brothers about to launch the first balloon flight sparking a fad that affected numerous aspects of culture such as photography The disc includes the first aerial photographs taken from a balloon in 1858

To feed your interest there are 1.5 hours of animated films with narration that delve into such topics as the difference between hot-air and gas balloons and how they operate Users can also examine artifacts, old engravings and posters A great resource!

Totem Poles Myths Magic and Monumental Art on the Pacific Northwest Coast

From Canadian Museum of Civilization
Requires Windows/Mac CD-ROM drive
Price $58 95

For national content, check out two of the Canadian Museum of Civilization s titles The first, Totem Poles Myths, Magic and Monumental Art on the Pacific Northwest Coast is an exquisite production that examines the tradition of totem pole carving by Canada's first people Over 200 poles are shown, along with the stories that each tells. Part history part art, part social science this CD is the best.

Special Delivery!

From, Canadian Museum of Civilization
Requires. Windows/Mac, CD ROM drive
Price $38 95

The other program from the museum, due out soon, will be a boon to stamp collectors and stamp clubs and a useful tool for school projects. Special Delivery! contains a complete (to 1996) catalogue and history of Canadian postage stamps and postal accessories (for example mail boxes) with color photos

There is also a postal trivia quiz and private correspondence of famous people You can also copy and paste from the catalogue to create and assemble your own stamp album

One section explains in detail how to start a stamp collection, complete with virtual album, pages, stamps, tweezers etc. It also includes information on how to get the most out of stamp clubs auctions and trading

For All Mankind

From Voyager
Requires Windows/Mac CD ROM drive
Price $30

For space fanatics, consider For All Mankind from Voyager—another company that ignores the mainstream and produces numerous niche products. Where else would you find accounts of all 17 Apollo space missions, with videos and audio from the 24 astronauts involved?

This program also includes diagrams of the spacecraft and equipment maps of lunar landing sites and an animated illustration of a lunar voyage The disc is based on the documentary of the same name that was nominated for an Academy Award

Pathways Through Jerusalem

From SoftKey
Requires Windows/Mac CD ROM drive
Price $69

The teen years are often a time where kids either "get religion or leave it But either way they may find that Pathways Through Jerusalem is a good way to develop a historical perspective of several mainstream religions The program's two CDs are filled with pictures and videos organized around five ancient tour guides for a historical perspective and four modern guides that take you around present-day Jerusalem

This is backed up by archaeological findings and the writings taken from such sources such as the *Bible* the *Koran* and modern news media Find out why city upon city has been built here and why it is a source of passion for so many people A detailed database provides additional information on the important events people and sites that have shaped the city

Eyewitness History of the World

From Dorling Kindersley
Requires Windows CD-ROM drive
Price $50

For teens up to about Grade 9 Eyewitness History of the World will provide hours of exploration and a great source of information on central events in history But it can be rather selective

For example there is video and an audio discussion of Tiananmen Square but only a vague reference to the Cultural Revolution which wrecked havoc on the general Chinese population for years However if your children have grown up on the series of DK Eyewitness books, you will appreciate the quality and scope of the reference material found in the software

Dorling Kindersley is synonymous with quality and its CD library is no exception. This program integrates technological cultural and social aspects of history along with conquests, wars and invasions

The Silk Road

From DNA Multimedia
Requires Windows/Mac, CD-ROM drive
Price $54 95

THE SILK ROAD
SILK ROAD

The Silk Road from Vancouver s DNA is a treasure I m not the only one who thinks so The program won first prize in a field of 600 entries in the educational multimedia category at the Macromedia's People s Choice Awards in May This multimedia CD opens you to the library of the future The Silk Road gives adults some insight into the rich resource material that the next generation of kids can expect

In one slick multimedia documentary style program you learn about the history and the physical journey of the east west trading route where silk was a commodity as powerful as gold To complete the lesson there are chapters on religions of the time, the people

Continued on page 63

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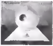

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The teen software market

*Continued from page **61***

and places along the route, the languages and the explorers who established the link in the first place

The detail is wonderful For example the "religions" chapter includes Buddhism, Islam the Nestorian Christian Church Manichaeism, and Zoroastrianism. Click the first and hear and read about its history and principles sects how it was spread, and the sounds of Buddhism You can almost feel the heat of the desert and the colossal effort that it took to traverse continents just to trade treasured goods

Today, the mix of cultures occurs almost instantly with jet travel telephones and the Internet Then the process was slower but the result was the same The program takes you along the road of change that was the byproduct of trade Look closer and you ll find the structure of the program is a journey into the future of reference media

Klondike Gold
From DNA Multimedia
Requires Windows/Mac, CD-ROM drive
Price $40

A second CD of interest from DNA (distributed by General Publishing Subsidiary Elan Press) is Klondike Gold It is another outstanding documentary done in concert with the Dawson City Museum. The photo collection is superb and there are original rare soundtracks of Robert Service reading his poetry

My local school is using it for a project covering a range of disciplines and for good reason Klondike Gold is pure Canadian content. It covers the history of the gold rush technical aspects of mining, art poetry and music of the times and the various people involved, from parlor ladies to preachers to the miners

English lit and grammar

English
From Pro One
Requires Windows CD-ROM drive
Price $50

Pro One offers two other tutorial sets for this age group The first a four-CD ROM program called English is rated for "college bound" students. The program offers a heavy dose of grammar to make up for any lack of it in an earlier curriculum It covers composition and is supposed to stretch across all of high school.

The presentation is very straight forward Concepts are explained and exercises presented both as examples and as problems to be worked out Help in finding the correct solutions is always available Pro One's approach is detailed and systematic.

High School
Middle School
From Pro One
Requires Windows CD ROM Drive
Price $50 each

Pro One also publishes similar products for middle school grammar The six-CD ROM High School program is more general than English and is presented as a learning and resource library with a grammar section that helps students learn how to write term papers It has a word processor and outliner with thesaurus spell checker and automated footnotes bibliography and formatting. There is also a term paper style and resource guide All this with detailed step-by step tutorials that can t miss

Want more? You also get Webster's Concise Encyclopedia, 1 200 advanced vocabulary words found on college entrance tests a first year algebra course and a full year of geometry Charts and reports measure and record progress The math segments include on-screen protractors, a scientific calculator and an algebraic function plotter

For younger teens Pro One offers another six-CD ROM set called Middle School which includes book report writing in addition to math and grammar

Discovering Shakespeare
From IVI Publishing
Requires Windows/Mac CD-ROM drive
Price $42

I would really like to see more products like Discovering Shakespeare—a synopsis of the Bard's 34 plays and the text of eight of his sonnets The disc gives an introduction to the plays before users read or see them

Where this CD excels is in its background material Subject groups like Shakespeare's Life Times Theatres Myths and Legends ➤

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surrounding him provide a number of video sequences that discuss or explain the idea. For instance, under Life, there are reports about his love life. In Times there is information on bear baiting and on how potatoes were imported from the New World.

Thumbnail Theatre: MacBeth
From: Corel
Requires: Windows 95/Mac, CD-ROM drive
Price: None yet, product in beta at press time

Not to be left out, Corel Corp. is expected release its own Shakespeare CD-ROM called Thumbnail Theatre: MacBeth this month. This disc also treats users to extensive information about the life and times of Shakespeare and of his play *MacBeth*.

A sort of silly cartoon gives a synopsis of the play, but this is just the thing to get the attention of reluctant teens. Then the program gets serious. The complete text of the play is on screen and can be printed. There is a section on each character and extensive information on theatres of the time, including ones in which children did all the acting. There is all the background information that teachers want to make the play meaningful for middle school and early high school students.

R.E.A.D.
From: Corel
Requires: Windows 95/Mac, CD-ROM drive
Price:

Corel is also expected to release R.E.A.D. (Reading Educational Auditive Development Program) this month. This program teaches phonics for English as well as decoding (reading) and encoding (spelling) skills to help all ages develop and enhance reading and writing skills. So why is it in this article?

It should be a great resource for students struggling with poor reading skills, English as a second language students, exchange students and recent immigrants and those "who have difficulty with literacy due to problems in auditory processing of written text."

Sciences

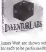
Science
From: Pro One
Requires: Windows, CD-ROM drive
Price: $50

This may sound like a recording, but *Pro One* has another heavyweight product that covers high school science called Science. Again the program comes on four content-packed CDs—two for biology, one for physics and one for chemistry.

The biology discs include interactive diagrams and explanations. The detail is extensive and goes over the material from several directions with quizzes to make sure the student understands the topic. The physics and chemistry CDs concentrate on mathematical aspects of the two subjects. There are fewer "facts" and more calculating of things such as acceleration or chemical equations.

However, the approach here is detailed: example problems are shown with their solution, problems, the mathematical solution to the problem, and, if that is not enough, a detailed mathematical and written explanation of the problem and solution is provided. This title doesn't miss any tricks. It is a good bet if your teen is struggling over concepts in science.

InventorLabs
From: Houghton Mifflin
Requires: Windows/Mac
Price: $55



InventorLabs mixes science, history, experimentation and education. The inventions of three great inventors including Thomas Edison, Canada's own Alexander Graham Bell and James Watt are shown with a key experiment for each to be performed by the teen. The program also includes memorabilia, scientific information, scrapbooks and original patent sheets in each lab.

For further investigation, teens can go into a different area to test principles of aerodynamics, circuits, gears, temperature, induced current, optical lens pitch/frequency and resistance. For example, in the Circuits section, users test how much current will flow through three sizes of four different types of wire.

A "further study" area explains the princi

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ple in detailed text This is a good program for budding scientists, ages 12 to 15

Corel ChemLab
From Corel
Requires Windows 3 1/95 CD-ROM drive
Price $89 95

If teens want to have a little fun with chemistry and you are not keen on evacuating the house then try Corel ChemLab This is the best multimedia product I have seen from the Ottawa software giant and is not a child's toy

The screen looks like a chemistry lab with scales mixers titration setups reagents etc. all of which are interactive You can run predesigned experiments or try your hand at original ones The former come with video clips of actual experiments and a gas lab In case you want to be a little more technical or know the what and why of chemistry Houghton Mifflin's *General Chemistry* textbook is provided online along with a 3D molecule viewer

The product was beta tested in high schools in the Ottawa area where it received rave reviews It is a great alternative to frustrating chemistry sets ChemLab is a program that has lasting value So buy it for your younger teen and watch them use it through high school It won t go out of style

If it sells there is a whisper about a PhysicsLab CD-ROM Bravo Corel!

QuickCAD
From Softdesk
Requires Windows 95
Price $124 95

QuickCAD
If you imagine it you can draw it with QuickCAD!

If your teen has dreams of becoming an architect or engineer or running a construction company start him or her off early with CAD (computer aided design) software—computer based high powered drafting programs

Many of these products cost $600 and up and up (your teen may already be using an older DOS version at school) However Softdesk offers a more affordable full-featured 32-bit program called QuickCAD It is not a kiddie version but is rated for beginner to expert (adult users) Your teen can carry this program to university or into the field There is a bit of a learning curve but the manual comes with "two-minute tutorials that even computer journalists find easy to use

Indeed, Softdesk sent the product to the U.S Air Force Academy for evaleation against other CAD programs including AutoCAD LT The Academy turned the kids loose on the software without the manuals to see how quickly they could learn the programs and how intuitive they were They bought, as a result, 200 copies of QuickCAD

On the technical side you can precision draw to 14 decimal places use object linking and embedding (OLE) to insert drawings inside other programs and there is an extensive library of pre-drawn symbols for architects and contractors "Wizards" guide you through setting up scale title size, etc for new drawings

The Home Botanist
From Micro Intel (marketed by E M M E Interactive)
Requires Windows/Mac
Price $65

the Home Botanist

Montreal's Micro Intel has two more interesting programs if you are about to overdose on the physical sciences The first called The Home Botanist is a wonderful old-fashioned course on botany taxonomy and herbariums. It comes from the Marie Victorin Herbarium in Montreal and gives the history of the man who made such a mark on science and science education in Quebec There is also a great section on the wild Aster and the taxonomic quest for relating it to current and pre-ice age ancestors, and a how to section on starting your own dried pressed plant collection There is also a plant encyclopedia and glossary

The Archaeological Detective
From Micro-Intel (marketed by E M M E Interactive)
Requires Windows/Mac
Price $45

Another unique program that schools will love is The Archaeological Detective It begins with the find of human remains at Pointe-à-Callière in Montreal During an interactive puzzle you study and test the archaeological data and listen to experts to solve the mystery of who was buried here There is also a dictionary archaeologist's manual and notebook. This is a great multimedia learning tool for social science courses.

Math

Mathematics
Mathematics II
From Pro One
Requires Windows CD ROM drive
Price $50 each set of five discs

Pro One's high school math software called Mathematics, includes one CD-ROM each for PreAlgebra Algebra 1 Algebra 2 Geometry and Trigonometry The setup reflects the way math is taught in the United States one subject at a time But the content is excellent and the design and layout is similar to Pro One's science tutorials The second five-CD set Mathematics II covers calculus differential equations probability and statistics

Continued on page 67

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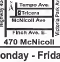

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The teen software market

Continued from page 65

kPOP Math
From kPOP
Requires Windows 3 1/95 CD ROM drive
Price $70

In Ontario high school math is taught as a mish mash of algebra, geometry and trig So if the Fro One series is too traditional for your child's curriculum an Ontario product called kPOP Math may be of help There is one CD each sold separately to correspond with each high school grade The discs can generate a new set of questions each time they are run. The designer has built in a cut and paste function so teachers can use the software to build tests and print out the product for classroom use. The kPOP products aren t fancy, but they have button and menu interfaces and boast 850,000 possible questions with solutions

Music

Piano Discovery System
From Jump! Music
Requires Windows/Mac
Price $324 95 ($99 95 for software only)

For the closet rock star, Jump! Music has the solution a 30-inch midi keyboard (it's no child's toy) complete with cable and a CD ROM with two full years of piano instruction, called the Piano Discovery System When this package arrived, I had nightmares about hours of fooling with hardware configurations and loading and reloading SoundBlaster files. Wrong.

In five minutes, it was all over and 30 minutes later my middle son was playing *Ode to Joy* with confidence. (Bear in mind, mine is a musically challenged family and any product that can produce results so quickly is a good one) The music course is a complete one with many musical styles, and includes lessons on reading music and concepts such as cadence.

The lessons are interactive and make suggestions and correct problems along the way There are also games called Shooting Gallery (for note reading skills) RipChord (for chord playing skills) and Aliens! (for mastering difficult note patterns) that let you first choose the piece of music you want to practice The kit comes with a coupon for another CD that has a third year of music lessons included, called The Classic Collection The software may also be purchased separately if you already own a midi keyboard

Once your teen has the basics mastered he or she can go into the Jam Session and record an original song

Classic Rock Guitar, Vol 1
From Ubi Soft
Requires Windows CD-ROM drive
Price $70

Okay the Piano Discovery System has taken care of one teen But now you tell me you have two budding rock stars Do not despair Ubi Soft has the solution in Classic Rock Guitar Vol 1 part of its new Learn & Play software series So let the music muse loose while your teen learns basic guitar skills from rock greats Bob Marley, Stevie Ray Vaughn Bob Dylan and Jimi Hendrix through more than 80 lessons and 180 exercises

Lessons are multimedia with videos scrolling notation and live chord diagrams While instructional CD-ROMs may not totally replace live music teachers they do have their place in a world where fitting music lessons between heavy academic commitments and other activities is difficult. Or they may be successful as an adjunct to live lessons, giving more practice and knowledge to enthusiastic musicians

Typing tuters

Typing Instructor Deluxe
From Individual Software
Requires Windows 3 1/95
Price $42

Typing Tutor 7
From Simon & Schuster/Davidson
Requires Windows/Mac
Price $45

Nearly last, but not least, are essential programs if your teen is not already rapidly typing with 10 fingers Happily typing tutors are not expensive and are easy and effective to use Two good ones are Typing Instructor Deluxe and Typing Tutor 7

The end of the tunnel

Resume Maker
From Individual Software
Requires Windows 3 1/95
Price $55

When all these great programs have souped up and motivated your teen to bigger and better things inevitably they will come to the point of looking for a job The ever steadfast companion, the computer, can offer one final bit of help Resume Maker will walk you through the process of writing a terrific resume formatting it and printing it out looking like you paid big bucks to have a professional do it for you! ❑

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Negotiate to make money

ON YOUR OWN

by Douglas Gray

Did you know that you can save more money and make more money simply by asking for a better deal from your financial institution? Most people don't realize that there is room for improving the financial transaction and therefore don't ask. Or sometimes people simply don't know how to negotiate or feel intimidated by the process.

The easiest way to make money is to negotiate the best bargain. This means knowing how the system operates and knowing how to ask when, for example, getting a guaranteed investment certificate (GIC) business loan or mortgage. If you don't ask for a better deal, you won't get one. This involves a change in mindset for many people, but it will definitely reap financial dividends.

Here are some negotiating tips that work.

GIC's • The rate of interest shown is referred to as the "posted" rate. You may logically assume it is the best rate, but this is not necessarily so. Some financial institutions offer you 0.25 to 0.5 percent more than the posted rate if you transfer your RRSP over from a competitor, or take out a new RRSP with them.

However, by asking this institution for 0.5 percent extra on your GIC, to keep your existing business or to obtain your new business, you will almost certainly get it. Bank branches are given a lot of autonomy and discretion to offer the better rates. Also, if there are any extra charges, ask to have them waived.

Business loans • Possibly you have a small or home-based business or are thinking of starting one. At some point you may need a loan. For these types of loans, the interest rate is normally a floating rate—a rate that is a certain percentage over the bank's prime rate which is set at least monthly.

If you have a home mortgage, business account and/or other financial products with the financial institution, ask to have a reduction in the lending rate. For example, you may be offered a rate of prime plus two per cent. There are various factors involved in the rate the institution offers, such as the amount of the loan, the type of business, the security you are being asked to give, your form of business structure (e.g. proprietorship or corporation), your other debts and the length of relationship you have with the lender. Ask for prime or prime plus 0.5 percent. The best that will happen is that the lender will say yes. The worst is a compromise rate.

Mortgages • If you intend to pay back a loan over an extended period of time—five years, for example—you may prefer to get a mortgage instead of a business loan, the benefit being a fixed interest rate, rather than a floating rate. With a mortgage renewal, ask to have any fees waived in order to keep your business. Ask to have 0.5 percent taken off the lowest posted rate in order for the institution to get or keep your business. Most will give you that and pay for the cost of discharging your existing mortgage and placing a new mortgage on your property. Your existing institution knows the market will do this, hence you will get your 0.5 percent discount.

In the case of a new mortgage, ask what incentive packages are available, such as a contribution of $500 to $1,000 towards legal costs and home appraisal. Get a mortgage or pre-approved mortgage commitment for the longest period of time available—90 to 120 days—depending on the market and your needs. Ask to have the lowest market rate between the time you obtain the commitment and getting mortgage funding. In addition, ask for a reduction of 0.5 percent off the lowest posted mortgage rate during the above commitment period.

In summary, make sure you comparison shop and ask for the very best deal you can get in order for the financial institution to keep or get your business. Have any commitments put in writing and develop an assertive negotiating mindset. It is a highly competitive financial marketplace and everyone wants your business, so use that leverage to your advantage.

Douglas Gray, LL.B. is a Vancouver-based speaker, lawyer, columnist and author of 15 business books plus a real estate investment software program. His books include Home Inc., The Canadian Home-Based Business Guide *and* The Complete Canadian Small Business Guide *(both by McGraw-Hill Ryerson), and* Start and Run a Profitable Consulting Business *and* Marketing Your Product *(both by Self-Counsel Press).*

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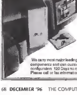

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Software gifts for grownups

BY JEAN ALLEN-IKESON

Help! There is an avalanche against my office door. No, not the great Canadian winter. It's bodies trying to get in. And they are not left over from Halloween!

It's my fault, really. I should have kept quiet. But here it is—I told a few seniors I was working on a Christmas wish list and I had bags of great software in my office. No Doom, no Math Blaster and no mega application programs. Just fun and useful software that, for the most part, they did not realize existed.

It all started a few days ago. They spread the word in the coffee shop and the hair salon. The crush started coming and coming. In desperation, I shut my door, then locked it. These normally staid and proper folks became like teenagers at a rock concert or three year olds in Toys R Us at Christmas. So please dear reader, buy them computer toys for Christmas and let me o-o-u-u-u t!

If you are shopping for the generation that has no more mortgage payments, can afford a new car every few years and is otherwise impossible to buy for, then read on. You are in for a treat of ideas that should take the heat off for a few years.

Everyone's a kid

So Grampa doesn't have a CD-ROM drive for his computer? Be sneaky. Plant a seed. Start telling him how easy and how much fun it is to soup up his computer. For the generation that grew up with their upper body engaged under the hood of a hot rod, souping up is like a red flag to a bull. The idea will send him charging down to the nearest computer store with a gleam in his eye normally reserved for the hardware superstores.

What if this ploy doesn't work on Granny? Do what my cousin and I did last Christmas. Buy her a few CD ROMs on her favorite topics. When she says, "Oh, these look so interesting but, dear, I don't think I can run them," just smile and offer to take her machine down to the nice young man in the computer store for a "makeover."

On reflection though, we may have created a monster—she is part of the hoard at my door. At 77, she is asking to borrow the Ultimate Sex Guide from Dorling Kindersley to find out what her French mother never told her.

Then there is Doris, retired dean of science at the local university. She wants Virtual Pool. The architect who runs the woodworking shop at the heritage centre is pleading for American Heritage Civil War.

My engineer sister in law wants the Piano Discovery System with the midi keyboard and learn-to-play CD-ROM. She is Chinese and says she was robbed of any musical pursuits in her youth by the cultural revolution in her native land. Now the old girl's "just gotta have some fun."

Shhh, I'm using the Planix Photo Landscape to camouflage the house. I've scanned in a picture of the old place, repainted it, changed the drive and walks and completed a total makeover of the trees and shrubs. I e-mailed it to the landscaper with my gold card number and an Urgent marked across it. Money talks.

Seniors on computers not so rare

Seniors are embracing the Computer Age with relish and enthusiasm. Viola Pahl from Vancouver Island has even written a book on her experiences with computers as a "disABLED" (her spelling) senior. *Granny's Love/Hate Affair With a Computer*, $9.50 plus $2.10 shipping and handling, is full of wit and good humor and will help you through the learning curve with laughter.

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Web site (see contacts) attracted 125 000 visitors Buoyed by this success the organization held the first computer show exclusively for seniors in Toronto on Oct 29

Most software stores and production companies have ignored this tremendous market. But one company I know of has actually been sending marketing reps to the big retirement villages in Florida with truck loads of kids educational software

Why? As indulgent grandparents, they want their grandchildren to have the best and to have worthwhile activities available while they visit. And they have the maturity and wisdom to see that computer-based skills and learning are the future In these enclaves of seniors, you will also find some of the most active computer clubs

Service sometimes the best gift

In this article you will find great ideas for software purchases There are other ways you can give as well for the holidays

If you are a starving graduate student but your favorite grandfather helps with your tuition, then see if he has any problems with his system Sometimes just offering to take the beast into the upgrade centre and dealing with the constantly changing technology can be a present of time that is most appreciated Or put a modem in and promise to e-mail him once a week for the next year. Just because you are in Halifax and he is in Calgary does not mean you should lose touch

Or with their consultation offer to clean up their hard drive of unwanted programs and run scandisk to clear up pesky "lost allocation chains" I do this each summer for my mother This last trick miraculously restored her lost screen saver in Windows

But a word of caution my engineer brother and his engineer son are banned from touching her computer Rather than helping her they like to tinker and change redesign and redirect for their own pleasure And she has hysterics when she cannot find WordPerfect or the printer suddenly will not work So make sure any changes or additions you are making are really desired by the user.

Another idea is to spend a few afternoons of your holidays teaching them how to use a program that has been gathering dust or that the user has not been confident enough to use such as a desktop publishing program or a spreadsheet Or spend time with them helping them find the Web sites and newsgroups that interest them I got my stepfather hooked on computing by introducing him to Web sites related to his favorite hobby: growing orchids.

Games and fun

Hoyle Solitaire, Hoyle Blackjack, Hoyle Classic Games

From Sierra

Requires Win3 1/Win95 CD ROM drive

Price $20 each

Most of us may be too embarrassed to admit it, but a survey would probably show that the solitaire that comes with Windows is the most universally used item on PCs. It is a clever way to get new computer users accustomed to pointing and clicking with a mouse

When they are ready for more Sierra has Hoyle Solitaire Hoyle Blackjack and Hoyle Classic Games The first has 28 different solitaire games on one CD-ROM! Online tutorials are instantly available The same is also available in a more detailed fashion with hints in the Tutorial Mode of Hoyle Blackjack Or try the Tournament or Casino mode for more play

Hoyle Classic Games includes poker bridge checkers, backgammon and more, for a total of 10 games An odd extra is the "attitude metre," in which you can adjust the personality of your computer opponent, making the game a little less "solitary"

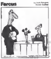
Farcus The 1st Treasury

From Corel

Requires Win95/Mac

Price $20

For the joker in the family Farcus, The 1st Treasury from Ottawa's Corel Corp , is a lighthearted collection of 743 full-color cartoons You can search sort, save and catalogue your favorites.



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Hobbies and sports

Catch this!

From EMG/Applause
Requires Windows/Mac CD-ROM drive
Price $37

Catch this! from EGM/Applause in Toronto is the official CD-ROM of the Toronto Blue Jays. The disc gives you 20 years of Blue Jays history in an interactive multimedia tour hosted by two well-known sportscasters The Hall of Fame includes every player who has played for the Jays If you have an Internet access the software will link you directly to the Web site Also included is footage of four Jays games

The Baseball Encyclopedia

From Macmillan Digital
Requires Win 3.1/95
Price $85

So you are not a Jays fan but you love another team? Try The Baseball Encyclopedia for the complete story from Macmillan Digital Based on the book of the same name, the CD also has 20 minutes of vintage video 500 photos of baseball greats and every conceivable statistic More unique is a simulator—using statistics to predict the outcome—that lets you pit players from any era against each other

Greg Norman, Ultimate Challenge Golf

From Grolier Interactive
Requires Windows CD ROM drive
Price $54

There is only one problem with this CD-ROM The publishers forgot to include a full sized picture of Greg Norman the heartthrob of the granny golfers. Other than that this disc makes a great holiday gift especially for those non-snowbirds who can only dream about golf during the winter. It even comes with a course that changes from spring to summer to fall

The golf simulation engine captures the player's swing, style, preferences, strategies and skills and lets you modify everything with 44 options from distance to accuracy of spin.

Virtual Pool

From Interplay
Requires Windows
Price $79

Virtual Pool is an excellent simulation game It allows you to zoom in on shots and has great video lessons for difficult trick shots by pool legend Lou Butera

TrophyBass 2

From Sierra
Requires Windows
Price $76

McClane's New Standard Fishing Encyclopedia and International Angling Guide

From Lifestyle Software
Requires Windows
Price $40

For fishing enthusiasts there are two options. TrophyBass 2 and McClane's New Standard Fishing Encyclopedia and International Angling Guide The choice is between play and a serious study of fishing

TrophyBass is a terrific simulation of fishing, perfect for when the snow is as high as the front doorknob Just settle in, cast out and hear the fly hit the water Try your hand at tournament fishing in real lakes and if that is not enough cast your line into the Internet The disc contains loads of options for bait casting weather (wind in the east fishing's the least wind in the west fishing's the best!) seasons etc This new version also has full motion "pro-tip" videos.

Spend a winter fishing in Bull Shoals or four other newly added lakes (10 lakes in total) and then look for the landmarks and your favorite fishing spots while on vacation next summer! This program is that realistic

The fishing encyclopedia at first glance, seems merely a transferal of the book's information onto CD ROM But a second look offers numerous videos that demonstrate everything from fly tying to fish filleting and bait casting. The detail in the video on tying flies for example is quite good and lasts several minutes There is also a list with pictures of different flies and instructions for tying each Every province and territory of Canada is represented with descriptions of places to fish and types of fish

Interactive Sailing

From Swfte
Requires Windows
Price $65

Interactive Sailing from Swfte offers a simulation race in which you test your navigation and sailing skills While it sounds simple there are about a dozen settings that must be constantly watched and adjusted Even veteran sailors should find this program challenging. For more information, there are 40 videos demonstrating everything from tacking to the role of each crew member

North American Birds

From Houghton Mifflin
Requires Windows 3.1/95
Price $70

"Birding" is a popular hobby that is generally inexpensive Not to be left out of the Computer Age, Roger Tory Peterson of the famed Field Guides of everything natural in North America has his own CD called North American Birds This is meant to be a field guide, identification search guide (a key of sorts) bird call library and field notebook all rolled into one

Continued on page 74

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Software gifts for grownups

Continued from page 72

Pictures with Peterson's patented "field marks," along with habitat range, voice, similar birds and nesting behavior provide a multimedia approach to birding. All that is missing are videos of birds in flight. The field notebook is used to record sightings. The disc also links you to Peterson's Internet site if you have Netscape, Internet Explorer or subscribe to America Online.

Owls, Waterfowl

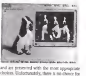
From Axia
Requires Windows
Price $74.95 each

There are other computer programs that deal with birds. Axia, a Calgary-based company, has some of the more exquisite productions. Its CD-ROMs on *Owls* and *Waterfowl* are classics and have been described to me as the "seminal CD-ROM natural history presentation."

Best of Breed

From Macmillan Digital
Requires Windows/Mac
Price $55

The furrier and less wild sort of wildlife is presented in Best of Breed from the American Kennel Club's multimedia guide to dogs. Like Microsoft Dogs, this CD-ROM gives an exhaustive listing of breeds with descriptions, pictures, and videos. There is also a buyer's guide in which you key in your preferences for shedding, activity, size, friendliness, etc.



and are presented with the most appropriate choices. Unfortunately, there is no choice for a breed that doesn't howl.

On the plus side, this disc's sections on training are wonderful and are written with a sense of humor. It even tells you how to stop your dog from barking while you are having sex—don't let him or her on the bed to quiet him!

Worldwide Auto Guide

From Corel
Requires Windows/Mac
Price $29.95

Automobiles are the great North American hobby—a.k.a. obsession. Corel has released a database CD-ROM with 3,600 different 1996 models and 6,000 color photographs called Worldwide Auto Guide. The disc includes general specifications, fuel consumption, engine, drivetrain, features and options. The unique aspect of the guide is that the same disc offers six languages options: English, French, Italian, Spanish, German and Portuguese. It also allows you to convert such things as prices from dollars to pounds, and fuel consumption from gallons to litres.

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-Camcorder Magazine, May 1996

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AstroScopes, The Enchanted Astrologer
From Lifestyle Software
Requires Windows
Price $49

For those with celestial hobbies there is AstroScopes, The Enchanted Astrologer This is much more than the daily horoscope in the local newspaper The makers of this program are serious about their astrology They provide a timeline of astrological history adjustments for orb size for natal and daily horoscopes casting horoscopes etc

Confused? So am I but I am sure that somewhere here is a horoscope that will tell me that I will be healthy wealthy and wise and my kids will no longer scream when I tell them it s time to do their homework

Fiberworks PCW
From Fiberworks Co
Requires Windows
Price $220 (includes shipping and handling)

A final word about hobbies clubs societies and related small businesses often have niche products on floppy diskettes that would also make great gifts Look in related hobby magazines and talk to other enthusiasts One example of this type of software in Ontario is a great design program for weavers called Fiberworks FCW The company also sells loom-driver software Software can be ordered by phone or through the Fiberworks Web site (see contacts) I am sure the same type of programs exist for a large number of other crafts

Health and well being

Health Encyclopedia
From IVI Publishing
Requires Windows
Price $62

I'm impressed! If you bought the original Mayo Clinic or Total Heart CD-ROM a few years ago and thought they were okay but could be more detailed, then take note. New additions with Internet access are available and they are much better I have the 1996 edition of Health Encyclopedia but there may be a newer edition out by the time this article reaches press. The detail is quite good and the text readable

The Encyclopedia includes four discs: Family Health Family Pharmacist The Total Heart and Sports, Health and Fitness It assumes you are intelligent, responsible and able to put the material in proper perspective. The Family Pharmacist disc is very detailed with precautions side effects and separate lists of trade names for the United States and Canada. If you are a snowbird, it will keep you in business both sides of the border.

The new version of Total Heart discussed tests and told me the ways in which my dickie ticker can be fixed The information gleaned from this disc was similar to what took family physicians and a cardiologist two years of visits to tell me. What I learned from Total Heart could have saved me considerable anxiety

You won t find syrupy condescension here The program even recommends treatments for common ailments or emergencies.

AMA Family Medical Guide
From Dorling Kindersley
Requires Windows
Price $56

American Medical Association Family Medical Guide is the opposite of the encyclopedia. The advice is condescending and most descriptions end with "call 9-1-1 or consult your family physician." You'd likely do both without the benefit of this advice.

Where the encyclopedia suggests several treatments for stings such as topical cortisone-type creams this disc only suggests cold compresses and removing the stinger The drug list in the guide is generic only and gives the name and a brief description and the medication s uses

The DK title does however attempt to discuss topics such as death dying and home or hospice care But the detail could be ➤

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better If you have just experienced a sudden death in the family you do not need a CD ROM to tell you that you feel empty and that it will improve in six weeks You want advice on relieving the sense of numbness and regaining some of your energy here and now

Anne Hooper's Ultimate Sex Guide
From Dorling Kindersley
Requires Windows
Price $36

ANNE HOOPER'S ULTIMATE SEX GUIDE
A Sex Therapist's Personalized Program for Enhancing Your Sex Life

Unlike the previous title, Anne Hooper's Ultimate Sex Guide (Windows $36), also from Dorling Kindersley, does provide a surprising amount of detail and graphic descriptions Unfortunately, all the models used are twentysomething But the disc does include tips on removing mental obstacles to good sex and mechanical aids to improving pleasure One thing for sure It will cause a sensation under the Christmas tree

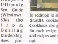
Food and drink

If the The Ultimate Sex Guide is not the key to your spouse's heart then try healthy cooking CD-ROM cookbooks do have something useful to add over the hardback variety They are easily searched often include video demonstrations of technique, and recipes can be resized based on the number of servings I have had seniors tell me that they no longer cook stew or pasta recipes because they'll have too much left over These CDs offer a solution

Down-Home Diabetic Cookbook, The Healthy Heart Cookbook
From Lifestyle Software
Requires Windows
Price $39 each

In addition to all the usual benefits of a multimedia cookbook, Down-Home Diabetic Cookbook also gives dietetic exchange values for each recipe. The software is easy to use and recipes and shopping lists may be printed out.

The Healthy Heart Cookbook follows a similar format but also includes a seven day menu planner with recipes for everything that passes your lips The plans can be based on 1,500 or 1,800 calories a day



With each recipe comes nutrition information on calories, salt fat and cholesterol content. There is also a list of substitutions for lower-fat equivalents in recipes you may already be using, such as cocoa and vegetable oil instead of chocolate squares The software allows you to adjust recipes for up to 999 servings.

The New Dieter's Cook Book
From Multicom
Requires Windows/Mac
Price $85

The New Dieter's Cook Book with CD-ROM would certainly be an impressive gift The 475-page book has color photos on nearly every page However the CD-ROM is a bit plain Jane for a product that bears the Better Homes & Gardens logo

The videos on basic cooking techniques would be useful for beginners. You have to go to the shopping list however to resize the ingredient list. The disc and book contain the same recipes.

Julia Child Home Cooking with Master Chefs
From: Microsoft
Requires: Windows 3.1/95
Price $45

JULIA CHILD

For a general cookbook, you can't miss with Julia Child and friends. She makes you feel good about cooking with cream and sipping and adding wine along the way. Indeed, she includes a short course on wine on this disc to make sure you get as much pleasure from it as she does

This is a true multimedia cookbook, and the developers have put considerable thought into making it a fine product Pick out a favorite recipe from one of the chefs, and watch him or her prepare it in a television cooking show format while viewing the recipe in the side screen. Most of the ingredients have links to text excerpts from Julia who tells you why she likes carrots, for example, and how to get the most out of them Rather than a utility this CD-ROM is dessert

Continued on page **79**

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Software gifts for grownups

Continued from page 76

The Urban Peasant
From Lifestyle Software
Requires Windows
Price $35

Julia Child is a hard act to follow but the 500 recipes for plain and simple cooking benefit from Canadian James Barber's easy-going style in The Urban Peasant CD ROM

The Beauty of Japan through the Art of Sushi
The Tastes of Italy
From Arome
Requires Windows
Price $45 each

A company called Arome makes some of the most lavish looking packages on the shelf. These CDs stand out from the pack because they give a cultural history and background to the various ethnic cuisines.

Through the videos on these discs you can learn how prepare sushi or the regional dishes of Italy They are not only cookbooks but also guides to what to look for and expect while traveling and dining out in these countries. Indeed the two-disc Tastes of Italy breaks the country down into regions with information on special cheeses, pastas wines, etc

Arome also produces The Art of Making Great Pastries and Vegetarian Delights. Both are worth a trip home

My only problem with these discs is that, to get the full effect, you must set your video card to millions of colors rather than the standard 256 The programs will run although they'll be a bit grainy on the standard 256 colors.

ELLE Cooking
From Groller Interactive
Requires Windows/Mac
Price $38

ELLE Cooking from Groller Interactive offers 2 000 international recipes in encyclopedic form Videos demonstrate more exotic techniques such as caramelizing a dish One of the better features is a menu planner for special occasions There are also numerous wild game recipes for venison, wild boar, quail and woodcock, to name a few The search engine lets you preselect the amount of time you want to spend cooking as well.

World Beer Hunter
From Discovery Multimedia
Requires Windows
Price $39

Michael Jackson's
Beer Hunter
Best Drunk When Fresh
News & Views

While you are fixing all this great food you need a little something to keep your spirits up The World Beer Hunter tells you just what sort of malty delights to stock up on. Beer expert Michael Jackson (not the rock star) takes you on a world tour filled with wit. This is a database full of great trivia for beer lovers.

➤

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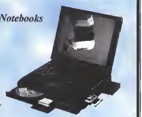

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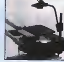

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Around the Home

Reader's Digest Complete Do-It Yourself Guide
From Microsoft
Requires Windows 95
Price $36

Black & Decker's Everyday Home Repairs
From Parsons
Requires Win 3.1/95
Price $39

Winter is the best time to plan your next landscaping extravaganza, cottage makeover or deck. To start with general repairs you might want Reader's Digest Complete Do-It Yourself Guide or Black & Decker's Everyday Home Repairs. Both tell you which tools to use and how, along with printing out a shopping list of materials needed for a specific task.

Home Improvement Encyclopedia, 3D Kitchen, 3D Deck, 3D Visual Home
From: Books That Work
Requires: Windows
Price: $40 for encyclopedia, $70 each for 3D titles

For new projects—from installing phone jacks to calculating wall paper requirements—Books That Work has just the thing with Home Improvement Encyclopedia. Even better, from the same company, are 3D Kitchen and 3D Deck.

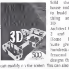
Home Improvement
ENCYCLOPEDIA

The Kitchen program allows you to do things you may have thought only expensive architectural programs would do: zoom around a kitchen in three dimensions after arranging it on graph paper. Then you can add the cabinet extras, styles, materials and colors. Decks lets you design and redesign section by section, generates a shopping and cutting list and then walks you through each step of construction nail-by-screw.

Ready for the cottage makeover? 3D Visual Home will help you change floors, walls, fireplace materials, or exteriors. If you can't find anything you like in the vast list of furniture models then link up to the Web site to download the latest editions.

3D Home Architect, Edition 2
From Broderbund
Requires Windows
Price $81

Planix Home Design Suite
From Planix
Requires Windows
Price $85



Sold the big house and want to build something smaller? 3D Home Architect Edition 2 and Planix Home Design Suite give you hundreds of professional home designs that you can modify on the screen You can also design the interior with the same programs. The Planix CD ROM offers a full line of computer aided design tools while the 3D Home Architect, which is a little easier to use, lets you take a walk through your virtual retirement dream home

Now for the yard

For gardening enthusiasts, get a copy of the December/January issue of *Canadian Gardening* magazine and go to the annual listing of seed, plant and tree suppliers in Canada and you'll find that many now have Web sites A nice surprise would be to add these sites to the favorite Internet sites list (or bookmarks) of your computing senior.

Complete Gardening
From Microsoft
Requires Win 95
Price. $36

Garden Encyclopedia
From Books That Work
Requires Windows
Price $40

Western Garden,
Sunset Garden Problem Solver
From Sunset Books
Requires Windows
Price $59 (Western Gardener) $55 (Problem Solver)

After your favorite gardening senior has found the links to Canadian suppliers they could use Complete Gardening or The Garden Encyclopedia to check the suitability and characteristics of each plant The first has 4 000 varieties, and the latter has only 1 500 varieties, but they are exportable to another Books That Work product called 3D Landscape 2.0 It also comes ➤

Electronics
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Pentium 166	$2469	$85

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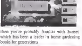
with a copy of Netscape to access their Web site

If you live on the West Coast, then Sunset's Western Garden offers a guide to 6 000 species, many of which we easterners can only dream about Search by light water or climate types If you garden then you're probably familiar with Sunset which has been a leader in home gardening books for generations



The company has another unique product: Sunset Garden Problem Solver. It contains hundreds of symptoms and pests, and solutions. The search engine helps you locate the problem quickly

Best of all, you can print out a monthly to-do list and calendar that can be customized for climate zones in Canada along with your own specific notes

3D Landscape
From Books That Work
Requires Windows
Price $80

LandDesigner Ver 4 0
From Sierra
Requires Windows
Price $69

Landscape Architect
From Softkey
Requires Windows
Price $53

Continued on page **84**

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Microsoft serial / ps2 J-mouse, with driver,	$34 / $44	Hispeed parallel laplink / transfer cable,	$9
Kingston 8Port 10baseT HUB,	$179	Box of 50 disks w. big labels, 1.44, formatted,	$18

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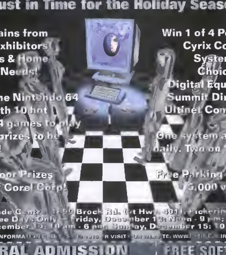

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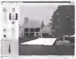
Software gifts for grownups

*Continued from page **82***

Planix Photo Landscape
From Planix
Requires Windows
Price $59

There are a number of landscaping programs, all of which are good. The computer was made for this type of application. They all have large plant databases and allow you to lay out your garden with trees, shrubs, vegetables etc, and then see what they look like in color 3D Landscape LandDesigner Ver 4.0 and Landscape Architect also let you view the yard from season to season to see how it will change You have to see one of the programs to believe how clever they are



These companies just never give up. Softdesk has just introduced Planix Photo Landscape, which lets you scan in a photo of your own house, repaint it and landscape everything You can resize and reshape the trees and shrubs, then click a button to see what it will all look like after one, two and five years. Of course, with all these programs, you can add sidewalks and driveways exactly where you want them

The arts and history

Theatre of the Imagination
From Voyager
Requires Windows/Mac
Price $30

Theatre of the Imagination is a visit down memory lane, when radio was king You will love this if you grew up with Orson Wells radio dramas This CD-ROM contains more than five hours of original broadcasts and a 40-minute documentary by Leonard Maltin. Wells voice is spellbinding and this disc a treasure

Van Gogh Starry Night
From Voyager
Requires Windows/Mac
Price $42

Paul Cézanne,
The Great Museums of Europe
From E M M.E.
Requires Windows/Mac
Price $60 (Cézanne) $50 (Great Museums)

Cézanne,
A Passion for Art
From Corbis
Requires Windows
Price $65 (Cézanne) $60 (A Passion for Art)

Van Gogh Starry Night is an engaging piece of art history as it relates to the artist's times For a less avant garde view of art, Corbis offers a wonderful CD called *Cézanne*, which relates the painter's philosophy and ideas to his paintings

E.M M E takes a totally different perspective with a guided tour in its two-disc set Paul Cezanne You can zoom in on 33 of his most famous works and examine details in any portion of the paintings

My favorite art CD-ROM is Corbis A Passion for Art which offers a walk through of the Barnes Collection of post-Impressionist paintings and three spectacular tours by famous art critics Sit back and enjoy commentary that is absolutely terrific and see paintings that are usually not available to the public

The Great Museums of Europe from E.M.M E. offers a view of some famous and less famous art museums such as Galleria degli Uffizi Kunsthistorisches Museum the National Gallery in London, Alte Pinakothek and the Hermitage You can view the works by themes such as mythology couples, still life, etc. and receive a guided tour on the topic Or you can go directly to the masterpieces to see the works in a particular museum This is a worthwhile buy for anyone who plans to see more than the Louvre when visiting Europe

Wings Midway to Hiroshima
From Discovery Channel
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Requires Windows Mac version coming
Price $88

For Second World War history buffs The Discovery Channel offers Wings Midway to Hiroshima The company bills this disc as the ultimate encyclopedia of military aircraft and aviation " The CD contains photos statistics, history description and in some cases flight videos All the Canadian made planes are here It also covers their use in all four theatres of the war

Since 50 000 Canadians volunteered to fight in the Civil War (with considerable financial incentive) I have included American Heritage The Civil War a two-CD set from Simon & Schuster Interactive It is a wonderful documentary/multimedia tour of the Civil War including the music art people weapons battles and more This s an exceptional product As a bonus there is a strategy game I can only hope more history is presented in such an entertaining fashion.

Bible study end genealogy

The Bible Explorer
From Expert Software
Requires Windows
Price $28

QuickVerse 4.0 Deluxe Bible Reference Collection,
New Bible Companion Collection
From Parsons
Requires Windows
Price $329 (QuickVerse) $59 (Companion)

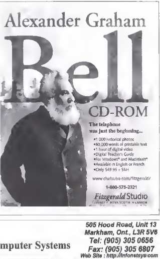
The Popa
From Lifestyle Software
Requires Windows
Price $68

The Bible Explorer is an inexpensive program that gives you interactive tours and videos of Bible stories It includes a complete King James version, which can be searched for passages that can be copied to the clipboard for use in other applications.

For serious study however Parsons has a number of excellent products, two of which are noted here QuickVerse 4.0 Deluxe Bible Reference Collection and the New Bible Companion Collection The former contains three different translations of the *Bible* and a long list of reference books utilities and annotated study notes This is a mammoth collection The latter contains the New Bible Companion and nine additional reference titles that cover history commentary theology etc

For the 40-plus percent of Canadians who are Catholic, Lifestyle has just released a CD made in

Continued on page ▸▸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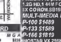

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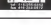

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Continued from page 85

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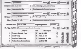

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Continued on page 90

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Software gifts for grownups

Continued from page ***88***

Windows on Wall Street Deluxe should keep the financial wizard in your family busy for quite some time. This program offers sophisticated tracking and analysis of stocks, mutual funds, etc., and taps into news retrieval services via the Internet. You can even test your analysis skills by using the "profit tester" to perform "what if" scenarios to see what buy and sell strategies work the best for specific securities. While it deals mainly with the U.S. market, the analysis tools are still useful in developing investment strategies and knowledge for any area. This is a very sophisticated program.

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From: Parsons
Requires: Win95/Mac
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Greetings Workshop

From: Microsoft
Requires: Windows 95
Price: $100 (Publisher), $34 (Greetings)

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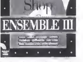
As it is the holiday season you may want to have some fun with Microsoft's Greetings Workshop. It contains more than 2,000 ready to print Hallmark Connections cards and projects such as banners certificates and flyers. Then customize them with graphics text or scan in your own photo. Visit their Web site (see contacts.)

Print Shop, Ensemble III
From Broderbund
Requires Windows
Price $80



A similar product is Print Shop Ensemble III. This one allows you to send your greetings over the Internet as well! It comes with 1,000 ready made designs 5,500 graphics and 1,000 quotes and verses.

Print Artist 4.0
From Sierra
Requires Win 3.1/95
Price $70

Print Artist 4.0 offers 10,000 graphics, 1,500 possible layouts and 300 fonts. The results are professional looking and the graphics will wow your friends and relatives. This program even lets you create party favors board games train sets and doll houses (so it will find a use when the grandchildren come to visit). It is rated for all skill levels and was designed to be simple to use.

Happy Holidays with your computer ❑

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Real color, real good

Canon's new photo realistic color ink-jet technology delivers as promised

BY ROSS MACDONALD

Product: Photo Realism Color Printing Kit for Canon BJC 240 and BJC-4550 Color Printers
From: Canon Canada Inc
Estimated Street Price: $69.95

Perhaps you read about Canon's two newest color inkjet printers the BJC 240 and BJC-4550 in the Lab Test report on color printers in the November issue of *TCP*. However, where those able fellows cloistered at the *TCP* Test Lab are running down the specs—and the veracity thereof—of these and other machines, I was asked to take a quick peek specifically at the newly touted Photo Realism that Canon offers as an added option to these

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printers. I had a BJC 240 to do this with.

What Canon means by Photo Realism is simply that, with the additional purchase of the Photo Realism kit they've devised, the BJC-240, BJC-4200 and BJC-4550 will print out images that look as good as a photograph. And they've pretty near managed to make that claim a reality!

Apart from including a nice plastic cartridge holder, the Photo Realism kit constitutes little more than a special ink cartridge (the BC06) and 60 sheets of special paper (HR 101) which, in concert, actually manage output that looks very much like a photograph—as long as you're looking at it from at least, um... arm's length... or more.

These "photographs" won't withstand closer scrutiny although, even close up, they make for excellent output from such economically priced printers (the BJC-240 I was using sells for only $249).

The way Photo Realism is achieved (as explained by an extremely patient Canon representative) is that the ink in the BC06 is of a lower density (thinner) than the ink in the regular cartridges. And it's specially formulated so that several pixels (dots of ink) can be laid one atop the other without congealing into a poorly defined, colorless blob.

Given the choice of laying down no pixel, one pixel, two pixels or three at the same location, the printer is capable of many more color gradations than with conventional inkjet technology, which provides only for the choice between no pixel or pixel.

The reason for using special paper is that a sheet of regular paper would look like it had been stored in a sauna soon after receiving all that fibre shrivelling ink (a problem encountered even with regular color inkjet printing).

All this technology is engaged using the regular printer driver that comes with the BJC-240 or 4550 when the "photo" and "high resolution paper" settings are selected just before sending your image down the pipe. The driver considerately includes a setup analyzer too, to warn you of conflicts—i.e., it detects whether the correct cartridge is installed and that the correct paper has been chosen for Photo Realism images—before initiating the print job.

Should you ignore these warnings and try to print in the "photo" mode without the special BC06 cartridge installed, the printer will still run, but your image will come out three times wider than intended because the regular cartridge will print each of the pixels required to create the correct color for a particular location side-by-side, instead of one atop another.

In order to test this technology, I simply selected some photographs from my Microsoft Encarta '97 CD-ROM and sent them to the printer. As promised, Canon's setup analyzer checked that I had the correct cartridge and paper installed, then allowed the printer to do its thing.

Hardly a speed demon—one image took five minutes 20 seconds and another three minutes 10 seconds to complete—I was the happy holder of two very impressive looks-just-like-a-photograph-from-a-couple-of-feet-away hard copies. Even when examined under a loupe, though, the resolution of the images was quite impressive.

In fact, the only genuine flaw I found in the whole process was that the image title Encarta wanted to print over each picture came out as symbols instead of the regular Arabic letters I'm rather more used to deciphering. I printed the same two images on my HP DeskJet 320 color printer just to see the difference and ended up with far inferior images—though with titles I could read. This text thing turns out to be a driver problem that a Canon representative assures me has already been taken care of, so anyone who purchases one of these Photo Realism printers by the time this article is published shouldn't encounter this glitch.

The short version of all this is that Canon's Photo Realism system works extremely well image-wise, and their immodest marketing claims are not overly peppered with hyperbole.

However, this impressive output labors under an equally impressive per-page price. The initial $70 Photo Realism kit comes with the BC06 cartridge, cartridge holder and 60 sheets of HR 101 paper to get you started. When those run out, a new cartridge will run you $59.99 while the paper sells in bundles of 200 sheets for about $40.

By Canon's own analysis, using the BC06 works out to about 66 cents/page NOT including the cost of the paper, which, with the application of a little arithmetic, you can figure on costing about 20 cents a page.

With a combined total reaching rather toward $1 per page, Photo Realism isn't something you'll let the kids run wild with, but it's rather toward the modest side of economics. When absolutely excellent color is the order of the day, this is most definitely the way to go. ❑

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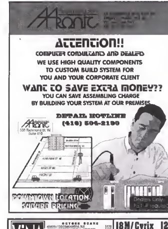
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Life in your pocket

A comparison of the Pilot 5000 and OmniGo 120

BY DAVID TANAKA

Product Pilot Organizer 5000
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Product Hewlett-Packard OmniGo 120 Organizer Plus
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Also mentioned:
Product IntelliSync for Pilot, Version 1 01
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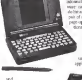


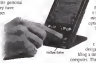
US Robotics' Pilot 5000 and Hewlett-Packard's latest OmniGo 120 are currently my two favorite personal digital assistants (PDAs) They have their strengths and weaknesses and provide quite different experiences but they also share a number of features. Depending on your needs and habits either one might be a convenient way to organize your business or personal life

First encounters

The Pilot Organizer is small and light—slightly bigger than a pack of playing cards—and very easy to tuck away in a shirt pocket or purse at a mere 12x8x2 cm and 162 g (4 7x3.2x0 7 in and 5 7 oz) It has no physical keyboard but uses a pen-driven operating system from Palm Computing, which originally developed the Pilot before being acquired by US Robotics.

Most of the front face of the Pilot is occupied by an LCD screen Along the bottom is an off on switch and four buttons that activate the four main components of the personal information manager (PIM) software: calendar address book, to-do list and notepad There's also a pair of oblong buttons that have page-up and page-down functions

The LCD area is divided into the main screen where the applications and data appear and a smaller pen input area surrounded by icons for an applications menu a find command, a calculator and—if you're in one of the applications—a menu of options.



The OmniGo 120 is a clamshell design resembling a tiny notebook computer. The unit measures 15.3x9 5x2 6 cm (6x3 7x1 in) and weighs 329 g (11 6 oz) with batteries

Unique to the OmniGo is the double-hinge assembly that allows you to fold the two halves of the unit all the way around—like you'd fold the cover of a coil bound notebook back on itself You can also pivot the screen display 90 degrees so the screen can be read both when the unit is used with the keyboard like a tiny laptop and when it's folded over and held lengthwise like a paper notepad

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The OmniGo's built in software is much more extensive than the Pilot's. Along with the appointment scheduler, address book, calendar and notepad you'd expect to find in any PIM, HP adds small spreadsheet and database programs, a file transfer utility called Clip & Go, and a couple of emulations of famous HP calculators. There's even a solitaire game built in. New to the 120 model is a copy of Pocket Quicken.

A utility called the Book Reader allows you to read electronic hypertext books, but they have to be created with special authoring software called Bindery (US$49), so don't expect popular novels to appear for the Omnibook. However the system would be useful for writing online material for specialized occupations like sales that might want to customize the OmniGo.

The OmniGo uses a Geos operating system and will accept pen input. It supports electronic ink, which is the ability to save anything you draw on the screen—handwriting, sketches, etc.—as a bitmapped image. The OmniGo also uses a text input system called Grafitti, a feature it has in common with the Pilot (and the Apple Newton).

Grafitti

What's Grafitti? It is a pen input system also developed by Palm Computing that defines a set of symbols you draw on the screen with the stylus to produce letters, numbers, punctuation marks, etc. The symbols are approximations of the letters themselves. However they are a mix of variations on upper and lower-case written and printed forms, so proficiency in Grafitti takes a bit of practice.

With the Pilot, you enter the Grafitti symbols in a small area at the bottom of the screen, whereas on the OmniGo you can use the entire screen area. A menu choice lets you choose between keyboard input, electronic ink or Grafitti. The OmniGo's three main input systems makes it more versatile. If you don't care for Grafitti, the Pilot also has an on-screen keyboard (with ASCII, numeric and international character sets) where you can peck away at the tiny virtual keys with the stylus. (There is no built in physical keyboard, and the on-screen keys are too small to operate with anything but the stylus.)

Another option is to do the heavy keyboarding on your PC, and then transfer the files to the Pilot. A Windows version of the organizer suite comes with the Pilot, so you can keep the Pilot's data on your PC too.

HotSync, real slick

Which brings us to what is, without question, one of the niftiest features of the Pilot. Included with the Pilot is a cradle that plugs into the serial port of a PC. Simply load the Pilot organizer software on your Windows PC, plug the cradle into the serial port, drop the Pilot into the cradle and press the single button on the cradle. Voila, the organizer files on the Pilot and in the PC's Pilot organizer PIM are automatically synchronized.

Using HotSync, you can create your to-do lists, contacts and notes to yourself on your PC, then load them into the Pilot. Or vice versa—if you've made notes or added new contacts on your Pilot in the field, you can just as easily update your PC based address book.

Beyond HotSync is IntelliSync

If the Pilot's PIM software is not to your liking, there's also a way to synchronize the Pilot to a PIM you might already be using on your PC. Puma Technology has introduced a product called IntelliSync for Pilot, a US$70 utility that allows you to match the applications and their fields in your favourite PIM to the Pilot's built in organizer. Right now IntelliSync supports Lotus Organizer 2.1, Microsoft Schedule+ 7.0 for Windows 95, Starfish Sidekick for Windows and Windows 95, Netmanage Ecco 3.03, Now Up-To Date for Windows 3.1 and Windows 95, and Day Timer Organizer 2.0.

Puma initially sent us a Version 1.0 copy for review, which we could not get to work correctly. The company then sent us a set of Version 1.01 disks, which solved all the problems we were having. IntelliSync works seamlessly with Pilot's HotSync, and once you've set the software up, you can forget about it. If you use one of the supported PIMs on your PC, IntelliSync is highly recommended as a simple way to maximize the Pilot's usefulness.

IntelliSync is versatile, allowing you to synchronize parts of different PIMs to the Pilot. For example, you could link the Pilot's address book with your Lotus Organizer address book, but have the to-do list synchronized to your Microsoft Schedule+ organizer.

IntelliSync also uses a floating date range that you can set, for example, 30 days in the future and 10 days in the past. When I first used IntelliSync, I didn't select this option, and discovered that the monthly recurring tasks I had set in Schedule+ were suddenly ported to the Pilot—all the way to March in the year 2000.

Connectivity for a price

The OmniGo has a built in PIM synchronizer, also called HotSync. However to use it, you will need to purchase a separate HP Connectivity Pack, at US$119. ➤

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The Connectivity Pack includes a Windows version of the OmniGo's PIM suite, along with a serial cable with a standard PC serial connector at one end and a special connector that matches the port on the OmniGo at the other end

There are a few more choices to make when setting up the OmniGo's HotSync utility—you can specify the serial port and data rate, for example—but once that's done, file transfer is as easy as it is with the Pilot.

A spokesman for Puma said the company was also working on a version of IntelliSync for the OmniGo, called Sync and Go When that arrives, it will presumably add the same kind of versatility to the OmniGo.

In addition to HotSync, you can use Clip & Go, which transfers files between Windows and the OmniGo. The Clip & Go utility is built into the OmniGo, but won't do you any good until you buy Clip & Go software for the PC, which costs US$69 95 It also requires the same serial cable that is used for the HotSync function but if you don t need HotSync you can buy just the cable separately for about $25

If you use the OmniGo as more than a mere organizer, Clip & Go is worth the money, since it allows you to move files between the OmniGo's applets and full applications like the word processor and spreadsheet on your desktop PC. For example, I copied a 200-cell worksheet from the OmniGo into Excel on my PC in less than a minute Because it uses a serial connection, and maxes out at 19.2Kbps, data transfer is leisurely, but it sure beats retyping.

More specs

The Pilot operates on two AAA batteries, and the manual says that a set of batteries should last "several months " After a month of nearly daily use, the built-in battery gauge indicated that the batteries were about 75 percent depleted, so mileage will vary

There is no backup battery, but the system will hold the contents of memory for a couple of minutes with the batteries removed—more than enough time to load a fresh set.

The model 5000 will hold 2,500 address records, about 2,400 appointments, 500 to-do items, and 500 memos A less expensive Pilot 1000 is available, which is outwardly identical but has about 20 percent of the storage capacity

A number of accessories are available from US Robotics, including a 1 MB memory module (US$149), which increases the Pilot's storage capacity to about 15 000 records.

The OmniGo runs on two AA batteries, and uses a lithium button battery for memory backup The OmniGo also has a Type II PC Card slot, which will accept a variety of memory cards.

Some downsides

I found that I liked using Grafitti but could not trust it to consistently interpret my scribblings. For example, quickly jotting down a phone number seemed like an ideal use but that exercise was always interrupted by the reality of having to verify—and sometimes re-enter—the grafitti symbol. This proved to be a problem on both the Pilot and the OmniGo, but at least the latter includes an electronic ink feature—plus a keyboard

One area where both units could use improvement is screen readability in low light There is a thumb wheel on the side of the Pilot unit that controls contrast, but except under the brightest lighting, the contrast is low Moreover, the most comfortable writing angle for me seemed to coincide with the angle at which the screen reflected the most glare

One of the supposed improvements of the OmniGo 120 over the 100 is a better screen, which uses something HP calls "holographic" display technology It is a noticeable improvement over the OmniGo 100's screen. It works best under bright light with the light source above or behind you, where it gives the impression of being backlit (it's not) It also works reasonably well under normal office lighting The OmniGo uses an on-screen contrast control that you alter by tapping icons with the stylus, but I still found glare was sometimes a problem with this screen too And when the lighting is subdued, the screen is as unreadable as the Pilot's.

Texas Instruments has come up with an interesting solution to screen dimness. It has licensed Timex Corp.'s Indiglo night light technology for some of its new organizers. This might not be appropriate if it takes too big a hit on battery performance. However considering that these organizers will probably be used in low-light conditions like hotel lobbies or restaurants, some kind of screen enhancement is needed.

I've heard of the odd complaint of the Pilot's case cracking The plastic housing does feel a bit insubstantial and I initially worried about its durability However after a month's use the unit showed no wear and survived a couple of trips to the floor—albeit a carpeted one In comparison, the OmniGo feels quite substantial—plus the clamshell design simply offers more protection for delicate components like the screen.

Summing up

In terms of functionality, the OmniGo is far more capable than the Pilot, blurring the line between organizer and full-blown palmtop computer. Because of this, pitting the OmniGo against the Pilot might seem an unfair comparison.

However, looking at just the organizer features, the two are comparable While the Pilot gives up plenty to the OmniGo in terms of the feature set, it can't be matched for its pocketability

The file synchronization works well on both, but while it's a built in feature on the Pilot, you'll have to pay an extra US$120 for it on the OmniGo ❑

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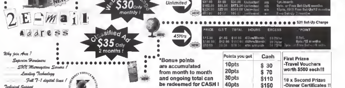

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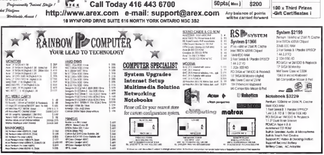

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Getting linked

One of the best ways to get people to begin visiting your site is to try to get other people to link to your Web site. One of the most popular approaches is to find other Web sites that are similar in subject or content to yours and then ask that site's Webmaster for a reciprocal link.

Go to a Web search engine and do a search on keywords that closely match those that would describe your site. For example, if you have created a site about your pet Chihuahua, do a search for other Web sites that contain keywords like "dog," "canine," "pets" and "Chihuahua." Check out those sites, determine which have the most in common with your site, and then ask the Webmasters of the selected sites whether or not they would add a link to your site in exchange for one from yours.

Most Webmasters are more than willing to add new links to their site in exchange for links to theirs. This type of arrangement is generally beneficial to both parties, as people visiting a site that contains a link back to your site are more likely on average to bring more visitors to your site, and vice versa.

Exchanging Links

There's a recent Web service that has taken this concept to its logical conclusion — offering banner ads to Webmasters who cross-link from your site to another automatically. The Internet Link Exchange is a free Web service designed to help Web sites advertise each other.

If you decide to join, you agree to add a banner to your page that will advertise another's Web site. In return, other members will display a banner ad for your site on theirs. You get to decide what type of sites you wish to advertise on and to advertise for, so you retain some measure of control over the process.

If you join the service, you are provided with some HTML code to insert into your Web pages. Each time a person views your Web page, a different 400x40 pixel banner image appears. The HTML code that is inserted into your Web page points to an

➤

Internet Law And Policy Forum Launched • NB—A new organization, with an impressive list of international corporate sponsors, has been formed recently. The Forum proposes to respond to and accelerate the development of solutions for the challenging legal issues and policy questions arising with the increase of business activity on the global electronic network. The Forum, organized by volunteer experts in law and technology, stems from the efforts of the Internet Law Task Force which was launched during an October 1995 international conference.

Contact: The Forum, Web site: http://www.ilpf.org/

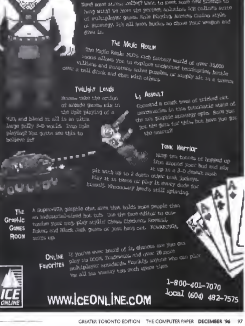
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image that is held at the Exchange's Web site. If a person clicks on the banner, the Exchange's Web server notes the request and redirects the user to the Web page. The Exchange's Web server also keeps track of how often people visit your Web site, and compensates your Web site by portraying your banner ad more often on its member Web sites.

This service has become very popular, and it claims to provide over 60 million collective hits to their banner ads Web-wide every month. This service is not for everybody—a glance at its members list shows that many of its subscribers are commercial or quasi-commercial Web sites. Some people may feel uncomfortable about sponsoring the occasional paid advertisement on their Web site—the Exchange offers a service that enables advertisers to pay for greater access to member sites.

However, it does have its benefits as well: you can check how many times your banner ad has appeared on other members' Web sites, and you can reasonably expect to garner more visitors for your site through the cross-advertising offered by the Exchange. If you are considering making your site into a commercial service, this avenue is worth exploring. Its tracking services will give you a good idea of how useful the service will be to you, and provide you with data on the traffic at your site. If you are interested in finding out more about the Internet Link Exchange, visit its Web site (see contacts).

And The Winner Is ... ?
One of the first to come up with and successfully implement the idea of a Web award was Magellan (see McKinley's in contacts). Its reviewers evaluate Web sites, and award points for things like organization, "Net appeal," comprehensiveness and whether or not the site is thought provoking.

Based on the eventual score, award-winning sites are given an "award" in the form of an image file proudly proclaiming the site as a Magellan award winner. Web authors are duly notified and are encouraged to place the image file on their page (which, of course, links back to the Magellan Web site).

This clever marketing strategy has made the Magellan award symbols ubiquitous on some of the better pages on the Web. Problem is, now everybody is trying to copy Magellan and there are so many awards available that they have become something of a joke.

Beware the concept of coming up with your own award to publicize your site. The award concept is a good one, but it has been significantly watered down by the fact that everyone and their pet rock seems to have Web awards of some sort to offer. Some places offer you an award just by asking for it (and by adding a link back to their award-giving site).

The only way awards actually add any value to a Web is if they come from a well-respected source—you've got to earn that respect for your award to mean anything. By the same token, if someone offers you an award for your Web site, think twice about implementing it. In most cases you will be required to add a graphic that will link back to the parent site. Check out the site and determine if you really want to publicize their site on yours.

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This situation is best illustrated by an e mail this author received a short time ago The following unsolicited message read as follows.

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> To kscheng@interlog com
> Subject. awards
>
> YOUR WEB PAGE has been selected by the JC and JIM awards as well.___ GREAT ! ! ! Want your award? go! to [URL] for a big picture ! ! ! OR if you want a smaller picture go to [another URL] and the pictures must be so that when some one clicks on it the link leads to [yet another URL] that's also our MAIN OFFICAL [sic] HOME PAGE if you want to look at it BUT HEY what do I get from this you say? ? ? ?
>
> DON'T WORRY] just put the big/small picture on your page e-mail ME [e-mail address] (JC) or [another e mail address] (JIM) and with in YES WITHIN 24 HOURS ! ! ! you'll be ON OUR MAIN PAGE ! ! ! BE PROUD WE SELECTED ~YOU~ as one of our winners ! ! !
>
> Thank You,
> JC and JIM from the JC and JIM awards ! ! !

(Names have been changed and URLs removed from the original message)

Note that nowhere in the e-mail does it say which Web page had been nominated, or why The awarding Web site was poorly designed full of spelling errors and linked to several other mediocre Web sites It also contained the following statement ALL winners MUST put the JC and JIM banner award on his/her home page " The award graphic was amateurish, and the standard version offered to "winners" was huge—it would easily dominate the page of anybody foolish enough to accept this dubious award

This award scheme was essentially a variation of the classic 'pyramid" scheme where the people at the top of the pyramid benefit by having many people linked to their site It's a very dubious way to seek publicity and any decent Web author should avoid schemes like these While no money changes hands you have to ask yourself this. who is the real beneficiary of the "award"? If you come in a distant second do not accept it

If you are determined to get an award for your site and can't wait for a Web service like Magellan to come and offer you one you can always ask for one A good place to check out many of the available awards (many free for the asking) is Cindy's Links Awards List (see contact) ☐

Contact
Cindy's Links Awards List Web site
http://home.sprynet.com/sprynet/CRHhome/award1.htm
Internet Link Exchange
Web site http://www.linkexchange.com/
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Keith Schengili-Roberts welcomes any comments, suggestions or HTML tips and tricks you may have You can e-mail him at kscheng@interlog.com His book on HTML, The Advanced HTML Companion *is currently available in bookstores Previous articles in the series can be found at* The Computer Paper *Web site http://tcp.ca/*

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MSN: the sequel

Microsoft boosts content, restructures prices for its online service

BY GEOF WHEELWRIGHT

When Microsoft unveiled its new, completely revamped Internet online service, Microsoft Network (MSN) on Oct 11 it looked like it was carrying on the long company tradition of getting things right the second (and sometimes third) time out.

There were fears by many of Microsoft's competitors that MSN would do well the first time out when it was originally launched alongside the heavily hyped Windows 95 operating system in August of last year.

America Online's (AOL) complaints were among the most vociferous and the company encouraged the United States Department of Justice to take an interest in Microsoft's decision to include MSN access software with the Windows 95 operating system and include an MSN sign-up icon on the Windows desktop. AOL founder and chief executive officer, Steve Case suggested that Microsoft's strategy amounted to unfair competition and expressed fears that Microsoft would quickly come to dominate the online services business.

One year later AOL is still very much in business—although competitors Compuserve and Prodigy have gone through some tough times—while MSN has signed up some 1.6 million members largely on the strength of its piggybacked association with Windows 95. Microsoft only spent US$12 million on direct advertising (not including its own advertising within the Windows 95 software) for MSN a virtual drop in the ocean compared to AOL's advertising budget last year of US$400 million.

But all of that changed with the much-anticipated Oct 11 relaunch of MSN which many industry observers expected to be all about Microsoft moving the entire content of MSN to the World Wide Web. Although that was part of the announcement, the new MSN also promises to feature all new services original entertainment programming that can't be found anywhere else, along with a surprising new "program viewer" (based on Microsoft's Internet Explorer technology) that can be used to view both standard Internet sites as well as proprietary MSN member-only content.

Microsoft is hyping the new service as a chance to "redefine what it means to be online" and is introducing a new television-

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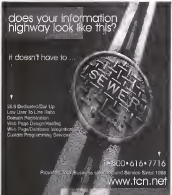
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"As to whether Microsoft is now a media company—yes, we are doing media things such as hiring writers, artists and graphic artists but we haven't chosen to get into traditional media"

—Bill Gates, Microsoft chief exective officer

style concept within the MSN member area called "Web shows." These original shows are divided into six different channels and Microsoft promises that they "will offer a completely new Internet experience for people with different interests and lifestyles "

In addition to a wide range of original Web shows that will make their debut with the new service, other features include news through MSNBC—Microsoft's joint venture with NBC television—and a subscription to Michael Kinsley's political magazine Slate (Both of these features are in Microsoft's Passport area and can be accessed without MSN membership Services under the Passport umbrella are supported by advertising or transaction fees)

The nature of MSN's Web shows range from the lowbrow 15 Seconds of Fame (which gives members a chance to offer their stories about major life events such as "the first time I got drunk") to more philosophical shows such as Retrospect 360 degrees, designed to offer a multimedia view on topics such as "history of the future."

Microsoft is putting a lot of resources into the Web shows and is commissioning a great deal of new material from third-party producers in an effort to boost non Microsoft content This is evidenced by the existence of shows such as Star Trek Continuum and Entertainment Tonight on MSN

"Our goal was to create a network that is easy to use, well produced, and makes sense of a new medium to our audience" says MSN executive producer Bob Bejan MSN takes our members from being spectators of mass media to being collaborators in mass media and does so in a way that is engaging, informative, and entertaining "

MSN unlimited

In addition Microsoft announced new pricing for the service including a rate of US$19 95 per month for unlimited Internet access—something other major online service providers have been slow to do Microsoft also claims that its rate of US$6 95 for five hours a month of Internet access will give it price/value leadership in the online service market

Microsoft will spend some US$100 million re direct advertising to promote the revamped service—starting with outdoor advertising, then moving to print and later television advertising In addition exhortations to join MSN will be included in a number of key Microsoft consumer products.

Microsoft denies that it is going after AOL or smaller independent Internet service providers (ISPs) and indeed it has signed up many ISPs to resell a content-only form of MSN membership that does not include Internet access in the fee

In fact Microsoft chief executive officer Bill Gates, says that since only a small percentage of the computer-buying public currently uses online services, the big goal right now is signing up new users, not encouraging existing users to switch from AOL or other online services In this environment Gates says growth by all the major players is good news as it shows expansion of Internet use and makes a bigger market for all

"The day I read he [AOL's Case] has 10 million subscribers, that's not a bad day" says Gates. "It means online service subscriptions are doing very well

According to Mark Mooradian a senior analyst with the New York based Internet consulting firm Jupiter Communications, Microsoft's new strategy for MSN seems sound and should yield at least the company's stated short-term goal of doubling its current membership in 12 months However, Mooradian is skeptical of Gates

Continued on page ***103***

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One of the odder art/technology events of 1996 was a worldwide photographic project that took place on Thursday Feb 8 when thousands of professional and amateur photographers around the globe attempted to capture in pictures the reality of the usually unphotogenic Internet

More than 200 000 images were received that day by Against All Odds Productions Mission Control in San Francisco which almost instantly posted them on the Internet on a Web site that only lasted for a couple of days

This project was the latest and most unique in a series of collaborative photographic projects involving photographer Rick Smolan, which have produced a popular series of coffee table photo albums such as *A Day in the Life of America* and *A Day in the Life of Canada* Smolan single-handedly helped to jump-start the CD-ROM as a respectable photo publishing medium with his *Alice to Ocean* book-PhotoCD title.

The most successful of the photos in *24 Hours in Cyberspace* give some idea of how computers and the Internet are becoming important to the lives of different people and societies around the world In many cases the combination of a picture and an eloquent caption has a moving result.

In one instance, the picture of a middle aged woman is not readily decipherable until on reading the caption one learns that the woman is blind and deaf and via a commercial online service has developed a vast virtual community hosting forums that bring her in touch with thousands of other people on social and personal subjects Most of her friends and correspondents are unaware of her disabilities. In Cyberspace some forms of inequality are irrelevant

In another case, Zapatista guerrillas in the jungles of southern Mexico are shown using their Web site Ya Basta (Enough Already) to get their message of reform and justice to the outside world

The words and pictures together are evocative and succeed much better than one might have imagined to present the human face of the Internet

Included with the book, a CD-ROM contains all the photos in digital format ❑

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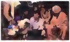

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MSN: the sequel

Continued from page **101**

claim that Microsoft simply wants to expand the market

"To some extent I don't buy that argument. The general strategy to go after ISPs and AOL seems a pretty sound one although it is true that the cost of acquisition of new users is much lower," he says "The pricing plan is pretty significant MSN will offer lots more content than standard ISPs and it is significantly undercutting AOL. I don't find it as compelling a service as AOL yet, but I think it will get there and should drive some people over to their camp."

Mooradian says further that one of the biggest shocks in the MSN announcement was that Microsoft had spent only US$12 million to date directly marketing MSN (not counting the promotional value of its appearance on the Windows 95 desktop) He speculates that when you compare this to AOL's US$400-million annual advertising budget Microsoft could do significantly better than merely doubling its membership over the course of 12 months with its planned US$100 million campaign

He also said he was surprised that AOL did not immediately match MSN's US$19.95 unlimited access price "Historically they [AOL] have been very responsive," said Mooradian "When Prodigy made big price cuts, AOL put out a release the same afternoon matching them He says that perhaps because AOL has what he calls a "more robust service" with more content the market leader thinks it doesn't have to match the MSN price

Microsoft says it does not expect to make money on MSN for at least three years, and definitely takes a long term view of the whole Internet online service market Microsoft says that there will be something like US$13 billion to US$15 billion in annual revenues generated on the Internet by the year 2000 and it is aiming to get 10 per cent of that business

"Once again there is a very different business model People should be very conservative looking at us and other interactive media technologies in terms of profitability," says Gates "Early investors will do very very well. As to whether Microsoft is now a media company—yes we are doing media things such as hiring writers artists and graphic artists but we haven't chosen to get into traditional media

"However as part of a partnership sometimes we might end up being an equity owner in something that has that [element or input of traditional media—such as MSN's venture with NBC]. From a percentage point of view you won't see them shifting our industrial code over to the media category this side of the millennium. We are a company selling more than US$8 billion worth of software, and the PC business and server business is growing as we are able to use the Internet to deliver the content and have a relationship with the customers," says Gates

"One of the key constraints [to growth of MSN] is how fast they can bring in great new people but we have enough money in the bank and money comes in every day so we can afford to do things on a long timescale We are investing many hundreds of millions of dollars per year in this" ❑

Joy to the World Wide Web

York Region Online, the digital information source for two Ontario newspapers, *The Era-Banner and The Liberal*, has created what it calls the ultimate Christmas Web site Joy to the World Wide Web

It contains more than 150 immediate links to Yuletide Web sites The links include information on Christmas traditions around the world sites where you can send greetings to friends and neighbours, decorate an online Christmas tree, peruse holiday party treats and recipes, get some tips on decorating and gift wrapping, sample toys from around the world, chat with Santa Claus at the North Pole and find unique Christmas gifts Each of the [illegible] pages is sponsored by one of the [illegible] advertisers

The site even has a special section for parents where software to monitor and block undesirable sites can be downloaded

Contact: Joy to the World Wide Web
Web site: http://www.joytotheworld.com/joy2.html

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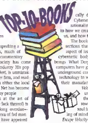
Selected works

The top 10 computer books of 1996

BY KEITH SCHENGILI-ROBERTS



①The Dilbert Principle

Author: Scott Adams
Publisher: Harper Business
Price: $25

Though not strictly speaking a true computer book, much of Scott Adams' wry commentary about managerial society has come from the computer industry. His popular comic strip, *Dilbert*, is unmistakably set in a computer firm, and reading the daily strip in either the local newspaper or on the Net has become a daily ritual for many people.

This comic look at the art of management (or the lack thereof) is an excellent—and long overdue—remedy for the plethora of fad management books that have appeared in bookstores over the past decade.

The Dilbert Principle states, "The most ineffective workers are systematically moved to the place where they can do the least damage—management."

Author Adams derives some of his best stories from the Internet—people regularly send him e-mail detailing the latest management insanities that have been inflicted on them. Whether it is people being asked to dress up in a fuzzy bunny costume to hand out a "motivational award" to another employee, the relation of cubical size to power, or what your boss really means when he says "the future is bright," you are guaranteed a good laugh.

This is also a disturbing read. While you are laughing, keep in mind that *Dilbert* reflects all that has gone wrong with management theory in the past decade. As Adams points out, much of the leading management theories have been devised by academics or professionals who generally did not have to live with the ideas they foisted upon others. There won't be a reader out there who will not recognize himself or herself in at least one of the ridiculous management situations described in the book. While Adams does not have all of the answers to solving the problems of management, laughing is better therapy than crying.

②Escape Velocity: Cyberculture at the End of the Century

Author: Mark Dery
Publisher: Grove Press
Price: $23

For a long time, artists have often been a good barometer of the forces that are changing and molding society, and this is the perspective Mark Dery takes in his analysis of art and technology in *Escape Velocity: Cyberculture at the End of the Century.*

Dery takes a level-headed approach to some of the very complex social, economic, metaphysical and spiritual implications of technology. Whether it is New Age mysticism tied with cyberculture, Mark Pauline's chaotically destructive machines or Cybersex, Dery offers a non-sensationalistic, pragmatic approach to how we create the machines around us, and how they in turn mold us.

The book is divided into different sections that delve into a particular aspect of techno-art, like cyberdelia, cybernetic body art or "posthuman" beings. What Dery has discovered is that computers have given rise to a new digital underground comprised of people using technology in ways never envisioned by their manufacturers. The title, *Escape Velocity*, comes from the underlying theme that these artists' works point towards the liberation of soul from body with the merging of mind with machine.

Escape Velocity is a truly critical inquiry into cyberculture, one that is provocative, intelligently written and presented in a manner that cannot fail to make the reader think. It is an excellent introduction to emerging cyberculture, and serves as an antidote to the other gadget happy cyberhype that has emerged in print recently. Easily one of the best books on the subject.

③Bandits on the Information Superhighway

Author: Daniel J. Barrett
Publisher: O'Reilly
Price: $26.95

This is a book whose time (unfortunately) has come. While the spread of the Internet and the World Wide Web is producing a revolution in the ways people meet, interact and do business, they are also becoming a forum for swindlers and schemers to try to take advantage of the gullible and unwary.

The book is aimed at newcomers to the Internet who want tips on protecting their privacy, how to spot common Internet scams (like the "get rich quick" pyramid schemes) and where to look for help if they do get ripped off. The approach the book takes to the topic is refreshing, much of it is told as a series of first-person anecdotes, followed by technical tips and the advice of experts. No doom and gloom and over hype about the evils of the Internet here—it is simply a book full of cautionary tales and useful advice about the risks of meeting, trusting, or even falling in love with people that you've never met in the flesh.

Bandits on the Information Superhighway is a well written book that will help you identify and avoid online risks, so you can have a more productive and enjoyable time on the Internet.

④The HTML Sourcebook, 2nd Ed.

Author: Ian S. Graham
Publisher: Wiley Computer Publishing
Price: $39.50

Continued on page 106

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Sympatico guide leads neophytes through Internet world

BY JEFF EVANS

The Official Sympatico Guide to the Internet
Author: Mark Stansbury (forward by Mary J. Cronin)
Publisher: ITP Nelson
Softcover (plus CD-ROM) 112 pages,
ISBN 0-17-606816-3
Suggested price $29.95

FREE
Sympatico
Guide to the
Internet
By Mark Stansbury
Foreword by Mary J. Cronin, Ph.D.

Since its launch in Toronto in November 1995, Bell's Sympatico Internet service has spread across Canada to the point where it now offers local Internet access via the Stentor alliance or MediaLinx affiliates, to more than 500 towns and cities from coast to coast.

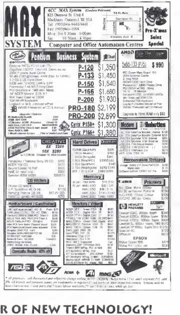
Sympatico recently launched a glossy consumer magazine called *Sympatico* (a periodical along the lines of *CompuServe Magazine*), and has recently published a book called The *Official Sympatico Guide To The Internet*.

The guide includes a Windows/Windows 95-compatible CD-ROM with a variety of software including a licensed version of Netscape Navigator. The book itself is a clearly written introduction to the general layperson's use of the Internet as it is presented through the Sympatico service.

Sympatico is a bit unconventional when compared to other ISPs (Internet service providers), in that its Web page contains a number of nicely designed, family-oriented subject areas, selected and maintained by an editorial staff from Media Linx Interactive Inc. This sets it apart in a positive way from many other, no frills Canadian ISPs.

Included in the price of the book is a subscription to the Sympatico service (usually a $29.95 fee), and 100 hours of online time. The book is both a piece of house propaganda for the Sympatico service, and a source of useful information on using the Netscape browser.

For the money you're essentially getting a free hookup, a good manual, plus lots of online time. This is a good deal, packaged as an ideal present for a friend or family member who you think might be ready to try going online to the Web. ❑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Top 10 Books

Continued from page 104

#5 HTML: The Definitive Guide

Authors: Chuck Musciano & Bill Kennedy
Publisher: O'Reilly & Associates
Price: $27.95

This past year there has been a slew of books on hypertext markup language (HTML)—but only a few have been worth the price of their pulp. These two heavyweight books on the subject prove that there's still room for well-written books on HTML. Each has its own strengths and weaknesses but should be considered among the best in their field.

The HTML Sourcebook provides exhaustive examples and details on individual HTML tags. The book does excel in certain areas in particular, its coverage of the HTML 3.0 specification (which has been somewhat superseded by the new HTML 3.2 specification) is still relevant and useful for Web authors who want to keep their eyes on the future of the HTML.

Whenever O'Reilly puts out a book, you can count on it being a good one. While Chuck Musciano and Bill Kennedy's *HTML: The Definitive Guide* is no longer "definitive"—it certainly wasn't when it hit the streets—it is still an excellent book on the subject. It goes through the basics, like how to format text on a page, use images, make links and create lists. Then it gets into things like forms, tables, Netscape frames, using server-push/client pull and some tricks of the trade. Everything is laid out concisely and systematically. There is little filler here.

So which is better? This reviewer finds he picks up *HTML: The Definitive Guide* to do a quick check on tag usage, but sits down with *The HTML Sourcebook* for a good long read on upcoming HTML standards. Both are very good books and either (or both) would be a good addition to any Web writer's bookshelf.

#6 Java in a Nutshell: A Desktop Quick Reference for Java Programmers

Author: David Flanagan
Publisher: O'Reilly & Associates
Price: $21.95

This year has seen a dearth of Java books flood the market—it was estimated that by the fall of this year there were more than 100 titles available on the store bookshelves. What else would you expect from Java, which is the "in" thing right now for anybody serious about programming for the World Wide Web?

Unlike many other books on Java, there's enough useful material here to make this book worth keeping. About half of it is designed as a quick reference for would-be Java programmers, and its stay-flat binding is perfect to have by the computer while writing code. It covers the classes, methods and variables to be found in the Java 1.0 application programming interface (API). While Java 1.1 has been subsequently released since the publication of this book, its quick reference format still makes this one of the must-have books for Java programmers.

Chances are that if you consider yourself a Java programmer, you already know about *Java in a Nutshell*. While it is not exactly the sort of book to keep you up late into the night (in fact it's more likely to put you to sleep), as a reference book on Java it is the book to have, and sets the standard by which other Java books are judged.

#7 Rebels Against the Future: The Luddites and their War on the Industrial Revolution

Author: Kirkpatrick Sale
Publisher: Addison Wesley
Price: $30.95

In the fast-paced Information Age that we live in, it is common to label anybody who hates computers or technology a "Luddite." What most people forget is that at one time Luddites were all too real, and their brief reign of terror in the 19th century English countryside was not aimed solely at technology but at the way in which technology was changing their society. In this book, subtitled *Lessons for the Computer Age*, Kirkpatrick Sale paints a picture of the Luddite revolution and tries to draw lessons from it that apply to our own age.

He details the rise of Luddism amongst the weavers and spinners in the counties surrounding Sherwood Forest in the 15 months between early November 1811 and late January 1813, when more than 1,200 weaving machines were destroyed and a couple of factory owners assassinated. Sale makes plain that the Luddites were not simply anti-technology, but were fighting to maintain their livelihood and standard of living. Their way of life was threatened by the machines that could turn out cloth and lace in quantities they could not hope to match. Whole villages became impoverished, and resentment of the machines—and their owners—grew

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48-Hour Burn-In Test

The parallels between our Information Age and that of early industrial Britain are strong. The computer chip has ushered in new and rewarding ways of work, but it has also meant the end of unskilled labor, and the decrease in leisure time for the employed. Aelsh reminds us of the conditions that prevailed in a previous era of transition, in the hope of helping us understand and inform our technological choices.

⑧ Canadian Money Management Online: Personal Finance on the Net

Authors: Jim Carroll, CA and Rick Broadhead, MBA
Publisher: Prentice Hall Canada
Price: $24.95

The authors who brought out the hugely successful *Canadian Internet Handbook* series have released a book about money management and how you can use online resources to aid you. Despite the reputation for having written some definitive books on the Internet, Jim Carroll and Rick Broadhead are first and foremost experts in finance—as their respective CA and MBA titles will attest. This timely book looks at how you can use the Internet to make the most out of your investments.

Though the Internet and the World Wide Web are rapidly maturing media, it has taken a while for the majority of banks, trust companies, investment firms and real estate companies to establish an online presence. Carroll and Broadhead start with the basics of money management, beginning with such things as estimating your net worth, and slowly introduce Internet and Web resources that you can tap into for help. From there, the authors take a tour of the virtual world of online finance, providing the reader with a thorough survey of what's available.

The authors effectively make the point that knowledge equals power and that the Internet gives people more access to useful information than they ever had before. Arguably this book has come out too early—major financial institutions are still coming to grips with how to position their services on the Internet, and a few major Canadian online financial services have appeared since the publication of the book. But for those who want to make the most of their opportunities now and have Internet access, this is the book to get.

⑨ Why Things Bite Back: Technology and the Revenge of Unintended Consequences

Author: Edward Tenner
Publisher: Alfred A. Knopf
Price: $38

Technology has made us healthier and wealthier, but we aren't necessarily happier. We live longer and enjoy better standards of living than our ancestors did a century ago, and yet as a society we often seem distressed at the ways the same technology that has helped us can also harm us. Author Edward Tenner is a chronicler of what he calls "revenge effects," which are the unintended and often ironic consequences of the technologies that have been hallmarks of the progressive. Tenner is a former executive editor for physical science and history at Princeton University Press.

Why Things Bite Back looks at the many ways technology leads to unexpected results: anti-lock brakes statistically lead to more careless drivers, because drivers are more confident that they will not be hurt in an accident; the meltdown at Chernobyl occurred during a test of enhanced safety procedures, and much, much more.

Why Things Bite Back is not merely a collection of technological perversities. Tenner makes the point that the way to reduce these unintended revenge effects demands the substitution of brains and finesse for the continual pursuit of more, better and faster technologies. It is a well-written analysis of our technological culture that will enlighten and amuse readers, and it revels in our all-too-human foibles.

⑩ Cybersurfer: The Owl Internet Guide for Kids

Author: Nyla Ahmad
Publisher: Owl Books
Price: $19.95

As anybody who has a computer and children knows, kids have a tendency to pick things up quickly and often master computer programs faster than their parents. With all of the reports in the media about the disturbing things children might be able to find on the World Wide Web, there are many concerned parents out there who wonder if the Internet is a safe place for their kids.

If you are looking for a good guide to the Net for your kids, one that instills some "street smarts" along the way, check out *CyberSurfer*, which is brought to you by the same people who bring you the premier Canadian kids monthly *Owl Magazine*.

CyberSurfer is aimed squarely at kids who want to surf the Net. It is written by Nyla

Continued on page **121**

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Multi-Player Games, Educational Software Hot In 1996 Canadian Holiday Market

BY JEFF EVANS

According to software retailers and developers, the home entertainment software market for Christmas 1996 is expected to be hotter than last year's, with the most active PC entertainment categories being action games, particularly those with multiplayer capability, and family education or 'edutainment' titles. The wave of new 'next generation' high performance video games consoles are also providing competition to the PC, with a particularly strong performance by the recently released Nintendo 64

According to Dave Ash, owner of Multimedia Connection, one of Canada's oldest and largest independent CD-ROM retailers, multiplayer games, which allow several users to compete via modem, have grown strongly this year As well, parents, particularly moms are focusing on children's software that combines entertainment as well as education "The two companies having the most obvious success are Microsoft and Disney" according to Ash. Alain Kassous, president of the Adventure Electronics chain, concurs. "Software buyers are mostly impulse buyers. Microsoft and Disney titles are in a price range that encourages a buyer to make a quick purchase Any educational title over $49, with a few exceptions, meets with buyer resistance. We have a dedicated rack for the Microsoft Home titles, and customers gravitate towards it because of the brand recognition."

According to Ash, Corel titles are also selling well including the Corel version of the WordPerfect line. The Photo CDs are also steady sellers at a smaller volume. Adventure Electronics expects a considerably better holiday sales season this year and in addition to better sales of software, consumers are moving increasingly to adding digital imaging peripherals such as digital cameras and flatbed scanners to their home systems. "Digital photography has rapidly become a big new category," according to Kassous. "There's no most popular digital camera at the moment. Both Epson and Kodak models are doing well."

Meantime, Ron Bertram of Nintendo Canada claims that the nearly instant sellout of Canada's allocation of Nintendo 64 machines has created a problem of demand greatly exceeding supply The performance of the Nintendo 64 which at a list price of $279 has more 3D rendering power than any current home computer, has made it the platform of choice for hard core gamers.

Website Offers Help For Printer Problems

Image Control, a long time maker of replacement cartridges for laser and inkjet printers and faxes has established a Website for printer users who have access to the Internet to get information on how to correct printing problems

The new site, www.image-control.com offers a "free, fill-in-the-blanks way" for printer users to describe problems and get expert help According to general manager John Connolly the company gets dozens of requests for assistance every day from printer users experiencing common problems such as unwanted streaks, cartridge failure, or strange noises coming from the printer "It was rare that our staff didn't have a solution to these cartridge/printer problems," Connolly claims Image control has resold over 120,000 toner cartridges over the last 8 years, and have dealt with almost every imaginable user issue However, the traditional method of telephone tech support calls is very time consuming and inefficient compared to e-mail Filling in an e-mail form has the advantage of requiring printer users to collect all the relevant information concerning their printer and its particular problem, before making the call. Also, e-mail based tech support never gets jammed by 'rush hour' phone traffic at peak times of the day

For more information, contact 1 800 465 4594 or 416 694 7509 or http://image@beachweb.com or www.image-control.com —JE

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CD REVIEWS

Rossie's CD-ROM gift guide

BY ROSS MACDONALD

Christmas is such a magic time of year... everyone is suddenly happy (somewhat) hitherto oleaginous relatives seem more enchanting and wallets get mysteriously more lean. Happy be they, however, who can count computophiles among their giftees. Despite those handy little home devices becoming irretrievably more sophisticated, making the computerist happy has become easier and cheaper in equal proportion.

Elsewhere in the august pages of this December issue you're going to find all kinds of alternative gift suggestions for that technowhiz on your list, whereas I've been given the task of coming up with 10 CD-ROM suggestions.

In no particular order, I've picked the following from this season's crop of new publications and the annals of earlier 1996 *TCP*s. A variety of topics and tastes are accommodated.

Microsoft Encarta 97 Encyclopedia and Encarta 97 Deluxe Edition
From Microsoft
Estimated street prices $89.95 $109 (Deluxe)

In addition to sporting much that's new for this year's incarnation, Microsoft has also introduced a new marketing strategy for Encarta, making two different versions available in two different price ranges.

In common, both the "regular" Encarta and the deluxe edition share the same core articles, photos and multimedia clips. Where they depart, however, is in the quantity of each. ➤

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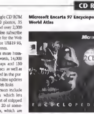
Regular Encarta comes on a single CD-ROM and contains an impressive 7,700 photos, 35 videos, 9.5 hours of audio clips and over 2,000 pre-installed Web links. You can also subscribe to a monthly online update service for the Web links and the Encarta Yearbook for US$19.95, which accommodates 18 installments.

The deluxe edition outstrips its more humble cousin in packing 1.5 million words, 14,000 photos, 2,300 audio clips, 970 maps and 150 videos and animations onto two discs, as well as those 2,000 Web links. Also included in the purchase price are 18 months of free online updates of the Encarta Yearbook and the Web links.

New niceties in the deluxe version include a feature called 360-degree views, which lets you pan 30 specific images in a sort of stripped down virtual-reality fashion, plus 20 of something called Multimedia Collages, which are interactive presentations on various topics.

Microsoft Encarta 97 Encyclopedia World Atlas



From: Microsoft
Estimated street price: $89.95

An atlas is a fine thing to have. And if you're going to have one, you might as well have the one that integrates with your encyclopedia. Specs wise we have 1.2 million places to go on this single CD-ROM and, unlike many CD-ROM atlases of the recent past, the quality of the various maps (climate, continental, political, etc.) is fast approaching excellent. Even more connected than its Encarta parent, this World Atlas incorporates over 7,000 Web links along with two million words, 3,000 images, 2,800 foreign pronunciations and 350 world music clips.

The Unexplained

From: FlagTower Multimedia
Estimated street price: $30

This CD-ROM features extremely high-quality photos, excellent illustrations, short but intricate videos and lots and lots of text about all the eerie bugaboos that have been forced into current fashion by *X Files* mania.

Topics are divided into the main categories of Strange Phenomena, Earth Mysteries, Beyond Science, UFOs and UFOlogy, Ghosts & Spirits and Mysterious Beings. Within those specifics cover everything you can think of from angels to crop circles to spontaneous combustion, all well illustrated, well documented and explained ... or rather unexplained.

The production values here are the highest I've seen. Even the interface is attractive with controls that look like that old analogue instrumentation that once abounded in B-movie laboratories.

The Unexplained makes for an excellent addition to virtually any adult CD-ROM library and considerately provides for printing many of the illustrations as well as any of the text. And that text is about as comprehensive as anyone could wish for—magazines, periodicals, societies, institutes and all sorts of other reading is at your fingertips on this single disc. Also, FlagTower accommodates Internerds with Netscape bookmarks for 30 Web sites about related material.

A definite must for the darker sheep in the family.

Bernard of Hollywood's Marilyn

From: Corel Corporation
Estimated street price: $24.95

In keeping with our insatiable appetites for all things Monroe, we have her here on CD-ROM. But it should be mentioned that this ➤

Canadian ISP Releases NetTrivia Game For Internet Users

Just when you thought you couldn't possibly lose more hours to the World Wide Web, (also known as the World Wide Waste of Time), along comes an addictive new online trivia game for Web surfers around the world. Now, you can pit your "trivia" skills against other players from across the country and around the world. The product of a team of 9 programmers, artists and writers working for Toronto based Internet Direct, a commercial Internet service provider (ISP), the new NetTrivia online game allows players to log on from anywhere on Earth to test their knowledge against a massive 30,000 (and counting) trivia questions. Unique aspects of this game include the option for players to add new questions to the game's data base, as well as answering existing ones. Players can interact with each other via a real-time online chat feature, allowing players to socialize and make new Canadian and international friends while playing the game. SysOp Dave Chibone claims to be aiming for 100,000 questions entered with the help of other players by the end of 1996.

NetTrivia is expected to be available in computer software outlets across Canada very shortly, at a suggested retail price of $39.95. In addition to the software and instruction manuals, unlimited Internet access to the game for a year is provided, for players who have an existing local Internet hookup. A free trial access to the game is available for interested would-be players, according to Internet Direct. A SLIP/PPP client to allow users to play can be downloaded from: www.nettrivia.com (click on the download link).—JF

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Take a multimedia journey through the life of Marilyn Monroe
MARILYN

disc is based on the book, *Bernard of Hollywood's Marilyn*, by Susan Bernard—daughter of the Bernard in Bernard of Hollywood who's the Hollywood photographer universally credited with having discovered Miss Monroe

This disc consists of Bernard's diaries notes and even audio clips of him speaking about Monroe along with of course pictures and video clips—which is where most people are likely to spend most of their time with this disc

There are 12 rare but not exclusive, clips of Monroe showing such things as her first screen test a gasoline commercial she starred in, her entertaining the troops in Korea and the infamous *Happy Birthday* pant to John F Kennedy Rounding out the 12 are several newsreels and newsreel interviews on the topic of her engagement and marriage to playwright Arthur Miller along with other paparazzi pressures that give us a bit more understanding of how Marilyn ended up how Marilyn ended up As might be expected funeral footage and contemporary retrospectives round out the roster

Comprehensive and cheap Bernard of Hollywood's Marilyn will make a pleasant gift for the celebrity worshipper on your list

Total Joplin

From Sunhawk Corporation
Estimated street price: $59 95

Right off the bat I should point out that this is an absolutely new CD ROM so it must be ordered direct from Sunhawk right away If you want one in time for Christmas And you will want one for those people on your list who love stride piano in general or Scott Joplin in particular

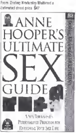
The most salient part of this CD ROM is that it turns any MIDI/wavetable-capable PC into a player piano but a player piano with lots of interactive options You can simply listen to the music or listen to the music while following the score (by means of the notes lighting up), or control the tempo and instrumentation of the music or even print the sheet music for each of the songs on the disc then shuffle over to your real piano and give them a go

But there's a lot of room on a CD ROM, so you'll also find the requisite collection of articles and photos constituting a biography of Joplin and his rise to stardom as introduced by "ragtime authority Trebor Tichenor

A good choice for the pianist Joplin fan or music lover of eclectic propensities.

Anne Hooper's Ultimate Sex Guide CD ROM

From Dorling Kindersley Multimedia
Estimated street price $47


ANNE HOOPER'S ULTIMATE SEX GUIDE
A Sex Therapist's Personalized Program for Enriching Your Sex Life

Okay this one's not nearly as titillating as we'd all hoped but it's the best of the various sex-oriented discs I've seen and everybody knows at least one person who'll be interested in the topic The long and the short of it is Anne Hooper has somehow managed to produce a CD-ROM dealing entirely with sex but entirely devoid of any pictures of those oh so compelling bits and pieces necessary for its execution ➤

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This "ultimate" sex guide is divided into four main sections with some video and a cross-referenced index thrown in for extra good measure. The main sections comprise Case Files, Questionnaires, Programs and a Sexopaedia.

The Case Files section contains a brief biography and sexual history of various people who are ostensibly real and with whom you can match up your own situation. But if nobody in there quite meets your needs you can create your own case history by answering some very discreet Questionnaires. Your answers are recorded, updated and saved (that means on your hard-drive. Buh so watch it!), allowing you to mark your progress as an emerging enthusiast.

The Programs section is kinda like those Jane Fonda exercise tapes in that it's full of mini-courses on gratification and the Video Library tactfully provides for the monkey see monkey do necessities. With the strategic movement of bedsheets, pillows, legs and heads, the producers have managed to make sure that nothing untoward points toward you.

And just in case you want to protect anyone else in the household from getting to see all of this discretion, there's a user optional four digit access code you can employ that stops the disc operating at start up. There's an additional password fail safe too, just in case.

Journey to the Planets
From Multicom Publishing
Estimated Street Price $39.95

Multicom's Journey to the Planets is one of the more obvious buys for the space-o-phile. The bulk of what's here constitutes remarkable photographs accompanied by comprehensive text and some narration, which you can control or just watch—slide-show fashion—once you've decided on a particular planet from the main menu.

But where the photos and text provide you with excellent detail on a planet's characteristics, moons, physiology and even exploration (where applicable), the fun stuff comes via animated fly throughs into the planets' hypothetical landscapes to see what things might look like if we actually could bop around in our own Millennium Falcon. Anyone with even a marginal interest in the topic of space is going to gravitate toward these explorations most of all.

Elsewhere, the level of information exceeds the childish without demanding the vocabulary of the proverbial rocket scientist.

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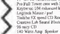

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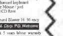

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And, for those who might still need it, there's a glossary of terms always within easy reach.

Journey to the Planets is reasonably priced as a fine general reference for those with a taste for the subject

The Cranberries: doors and windows

From Philips Media
Estimated street price $29 95

the cranberries
doors and windows
PHILIPS

Okay, so I'm one of the Philistines who doesn't find this band particularly tasty But, since so many do, this disc is probably a good choice to include here

The Cranberries doors and windows is another of those multi-technology discs (CD/CDi/MPEG/CD-ROM) burgeoning from pop music circles of late It promises "previously unreleased versions of" five songs "exclusive scenes of" Woodstock 94 and "rare personal" photos, clippings and memorabilia from all the band members

However there's more CD than CD-ROM in this disc as the multimedia aspects of digital technology have definitely been given a back seat to the music Up against 10 minutes of video—coupled with 5 5 minutes of digital video—stand 40 minutes of music and audio—most of which is coded for your CD player.

Though tailored specifically for Cranberries admirers, this reasonably priced disc might draw others who simply enjoy an eclectic musical palate or even collectors of may-become-obscure-and-worth-something memorabilia.

Poetry In Motion

From The Voyager Company
Estimated street price $29 95

POETRY
IN
MOTION

The good folks at Voyager—purveyors of many an eccentric CD-ROM—have ventured to resuscitate our interest in the ars poetica with Poetry In Motion, a disc featuring 25 contemporary poets performing their work and often providing some kind of commentary on their chosen vocation.

Among the more illustrious in this collection are William S Burroughs, Alan Ginsberg, Michael Ondaatje and Tom Waits. Even every cool cognizzenti's icon of anarchy, Charles Bukowski, is here railing against the boringness of poetry

For each of these 25 poets you get the text of whatever it is they have said or read as well as a small 5x7 6 cm (2x3 in) video of them saying or reading the same.

There's a lot of kookiness here that's going to make this disc appeal to more than just the literary elite—The Four Horsemen, for example, perform a five-minute "piece" that has absolutely no words. And for those with tastes running along more ➤

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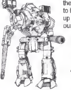

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BY PEDRO ARRAIS

Sheila Rae, the Brave
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System Requirements: Multimedia PC or Macintosh
Street Price: $44.95

Living Book's latest title Sheila Rae the Brave tells the story of a girl who is tough and seemingly invincible on the outside.

Her fearlessness is an inspiration to Louise, her younger sister who looks up to her older sister. She watches Sheila Rae kiss spiders, tackle monsters in the closet, bicycle without any hands or legs and refer to cherries as "bear eyes."

One day, this little firebrand decides to take a different route home and gets lost. Fear overtakes her for the first time. When all seems lost, her younger sister Louise turns up and, displaying all the courage of her sister, leads her frightened big sister back to safety.

Given the age group the product is aimed at, the story has all the right elements to hold the attention of the viewer. There is drama, there is suspense, there are endearing characters and—most of all—there is a lesson to be learned.

Pre-readers need not be intimidated for the program caters to them with spoken commands and information. The audio component is strongly complemented by state-of-the-art visuals, a hallmark of all Living Books products. Each screen boasts smooth movement of characters, with a multitude of clickable items on each page.

Children can choose to have the book read to them in its entirety, read the book at their own speed, a page at a time, or go to their favorite page at random. Sentences are highlighted as they are read aloud to give the children an idea of the spelling and sounding of the word before it is read. If the child has chosen to read at his or her own pace, they can click on any word and see it highlighted and spoken aloud. Linger on a page longer and you can hear Capone the dog sing, the daisies sing, another dog sneak a bone, cats in a tree, a butterfly taking flight and loads more. In fact, each of the 12 pages is equally interactive, enticing children to linger longer.

For those parents who are encouraging their children to be multilingual, this story can be read in English and Spanish. Other Living Books titles have been available in English, Spanish and Japanese, too—a fascinating twist to an already strong educational tool.

A musical score is another feature, with a sing-along section with seven catchy tunes that children love to participate in. You can even play the disc on an audio CD player and hear the songs. The tunes are easy to learn and you may hear them sung and hummed by your kids before very long—you may even find yourself doing the same.

The program also contains a map game that encourages players to find clues, eventually leading to a surprise. Players can find their way either via a conventional map or through a 3D view, giving youngsters practice at both methods.

As an added bonus, you will find the actual book that the software was based on included with this title. It can be used by your child away from the computer, a great tool for positive reinforcement. There is also a very informative activity book for parents that serves to expand the lessons learned on the computer.

For many parents it will give a fresh insight into what motivates and fascinates their children. If you have a pre-reader in your family, this is sure to be a gift that will reward the whole family. ❑

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System requirements: Multimedia PC or Macintosh
Street price: $49.95

It is difficult to find challenging games for teens. The active mind of youth has outgrown the basic programs that teach how to read and write while the applications of the adult world would be too intense (and probably too boring).

It is therefore refreshing to find a program that interests as well as challenges. MECC's Science Sleuths. The focus of this CD ROM is physical science, biology, earth science, math and engineering.

The subjects are presented as part of a mystery the teen is called upon to solve. These are not your normal whodunit type of games. Instead, the operator has to use logic and an arsenal of 24 tools to figure out the answer. To give it more of a twist, players have to distinguish fact from opinion, as well as determine whether the information given is helpful or useless.

In other words, forget about just guessing your way to the right answer. You will have to produce hard evidence to back up your hypotheses every step of the way. Get your facts wrong and you will be sent back to the lab to polish up your deduction skills.

Graphics are excellent, and include human characters, digital photos of different articles and clues. There are literally hours of video clips to review with clues in each one. Be careful, though, as the trail is littered with red herrings. All are amusing and none dry or boring like those found in some "education-al" videos at school.

To get players quickly up to speed, there is an introduction to the lab and all the tools. You can see videos, read newspapers, check databases, consult maps, measure, weigh, calculate, keep notes, examine graphs and tables, look up encyclopedias and documents, use Geiger counters, thermometers, forensic tools, etc. Depending on the case, you can

Continued on page 121

Hot gift ideas for holiday gamers

BY GORDON GOBLE

It could be the lawyer next door, your best friend, or that weird musician guy downstairs—it might even be your own son. At first glance they'll appear all too normal, but look closer and you'll see that faraway look in their eyes, that certain air that says, "I have a higher purpose." Who are these people anyway?

Why, they're computer game players of course, and judging by industry sales figures their numbers are multiplying. So at this time of giving, you'd be well advised to include at least one game on your shopping list—or the next time they're annihilating an aircraft, administering a bodycheck or zapping a demon, it could be your face they're seeing on the receiving end. Virtually anyway, you may take a licking.

But what to give, that is the question. Fortunately, we've got some ideas for you—equipment, software and controllers that'll put a smile on any gamer's face come Christmas Day. Who knows, you might become one of the converted along the way.

The basics

It's a generalization, but modern gaming demands more from a computing setup than virtually any other type of application. So if you're shopping for a dedicated game player, here are some general rules of thumb.

For starters, the user is going to need power. A Pentium 90 MHz processor should be considered the bare minimum for running the latest stuff, although Intel is about to complete work on its latest processor, the P55C, which will immediately become the chip of choice. This will put all Pentium owners a step back and result in a substantial Pentium price cut, so dare I say you wait till after Christmas for a processor upgrade?

Of course, all that power will mean very little if the system bogs down elsewhere, and since RAM chips are pretty cheap these days, 32 or 64 MB worth is certainly not overkill.

Video cards are another major concern, but here there's some controversy. While high-end cards such as the ATI Mach64, Diamond Stealth or Matrox Millenium certainly do the trick, there's a new kid in town—the 3D accelerator card.

Ideally, a 3D accelerator will provide much faster 2D imaging in all applications and eye-popping 3D effects in supporting programs. Unfortunately, but perhaps not unexpectedly, a 3D standard hasn't been established, making your choice a bit of a toss up.

My sources tell me that the best is yet to come. In particular, the new 3D cards from Creative Labs and Sierra that are based on something called the Rendition chip. These cards may well establish the standard to which game companies write, and should be on the shelves before Christmas.

Next, since it's a virtual certainty that all of '97's prime games will ship on CD-ROM, a gamer equipped with a slow drive is truly back with the dinosaurs. CD-ROM drive prices have seen a recent price plunge, making an 8x at $200 a great idea for anyone suffering needlessly with a 2x or—perish the thought—a single-speed drive.

Speed is of even greater importance if your designated gamer is an online addict. This is a trend that really caught on in 1996 and will explode in the coming year, pitting human against human rather than a program's built-in artificial intelligence. Going head to head over telephone lines is tremendously exciting, but it'll take a fast modem to get the job done.

Look for modems with data rates of at least 28.8Kbps or, if you've got an eye on the future, 33.6Kbps. Go with external over internal and make sure it says Plug and Play—there's just a lot less hassle this way, especially with Windows 95. The new Diamond Suprasonic 336V is certainly expensive, but with virtually no install troubles, an LCD readout and scintillating data rates, it's a good bet for the upscale buyer.

As far as platforms go, it looks more and more like Windows, in some form or another, is the way of gaming's future. Rare is the title that won't run through Windows 95, and some just plain won't work anywhere else. The advice from this corner? Forget about DOS and work on creating a system that cooks in Windows.

These are the basics. You're on your own now, Santa.

The games

Note: The prices given here are estimated street prices. What you will actually have to pay may vary.

Civilization II
From Microprose
Requires: Windows 3.1/95
Price: $60

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Perl

Programming Perl, Second Edition
Larry Wall,
Tom Christiansen &
Randal L. Schwartz
O'Reilly & Associates
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This is the authoritative guide to the scripting utility that quickly established itself as the UNIX programming tool of choice and is now establishing itself as the World Wide Web programming tool of choice. The book is coauthored by Larry Wall, the creator of Perl.

Perl is a language for easily manipulating text, files and processes. It provides a more concise and readable way to do many jobs that were formerly accomplished (with difficulty) by programming in the C language or one of the shells. Perl is likely to be available wherever you choose to work. And if it isn't, you can get it and install it easily and free of charge.

This heavily revised second edition of Programming Perl contains a full explanation of the features in Perl version 5.002. Contents include:

- An introduction to Perl
- Explanations of the language and its syntax
- Perl functions
- A Perl cookbook, includes database manipulation, programming aids, system administration, World Wide Web publishing, text and filename manipulation, interprocess communication, and more
- Object oriented programming
- Other oddments: invocation options, debugging, efficiency, the Perl library, linking in C subroutines, etc.
- Also includes a pull-out quick-reference card (designed and created by Johan Vromans.)

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CIVILIZATION II
MICROPROSE

As the title suggests, Civilization II is a sweeping story of nation-building and society structure that'll take you all the way from the first primitive village to interplanetary travel. It's a grand and astoundingly deep program built to evoke an understanding of how humankind works. Game? Ha! This is no game—this is life.

Civ II, like its acclaimed forefather, is turn-based strategy in its finest form. It's not for quick action lovers and most probably won't be a hit with the kids, but it will provide hours (weeks or months maybe—I still haven't finished a game) of thoughtful decision making as you sculpt the destiny of your own people. For those who think computer gaming means funny little men kicking and jumping and grabbing "power ups", this is the anti Mario.

Definitive Wargame Collection 2
From: Strategic Simulations Inc.
Requires: DOS
Price: $50

DEFINITIVE WARGAME COLLECTION 2
SSI

Why drop big coin for separates when SSI has packaged no less than a dozen top current and vintage titles from an assortment of manufacturers into one convenient collection? It's a four-disc deal almost too good to be true for war gamers that includes classics such as SSI's Steel Panthers, Panzer General, and Tanks, IntraCorp/Three-Sixty's V For Victory: Utah Beach and Harpoon II, Spectrum Holobyte's Command HQ, and Koei Corp's Genghis Khan II among others.

The downside? All the original printed manuals (save that of Command HQ) have been converted to disc, meaning you'll have to print them out if you want hard copy instructions. Otherwise, this is a hu-u-uge Christmas gift that'll keep historical and hypothetical war gamers going til next Christmas.

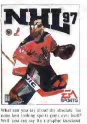
Lemmings Paintball
From: Psygnosis
Requires: Windows 95
Price: $40

Lemmings PAINTBALL
Plus 2 Bonus Lemmings Games!

The year was 1991. A little company called Psygnosis had just released Lemmings, a seemingly typical side scrolling affair where the object was to rescue as many of the fur balls as possible within an allotted time frame. Lemmings was far from ordinary, however, combining clever structure and charming animation with a ton of levels to fashion a compelling pastime. Within weeks, gamers everywhere were hooked.

Now there's Lemmings Paintball, a pseudo-3D affair that sees the little guys brandishing paintguns. Paintball definitely has a different atmosphere, but the same idea: save the Lemmings from all sorts of hazards. As a bonus, and this is what makes Paintball a great buy, the original game and its immediate sequel, Oh No More Lemmings, are also on the disc, now with cool new features such as replays and dual graphics modes. If you've never experienced a true Hall of Fame game, one that's great for the whole family, this is your chance.

NHL Hockey 97
From: EA Sports
Requires: DOS, Windows 95
Price: $60



What can you say about the absolute, bar none best looking sports game ever built? Well, you can say it's a graphic knockout with 3D polygonal players who skate and shoot and hit with uncanny authenticity from all angles and a rink that looks like it was pulled straight from a *Hockey Night In Canada* broadcast. With the best replay component ever to grace a PC game, excellent sound (including play-by-play from Vancouver Canucks announcer Jim Hughson) and a gaggle of awesome camera angles, it's absolutely mind-blowing.

Outside the rink, NHL 97 offers hockey fans a bundle of options all wrapped up in perhaps the glossiest menuing system ever created, with original music that drives home the big-time feel even further. But the question remains: why, with all this going for it, did EA forget to bring the artificial intelligence up to par?

Grand Prix II
From Microprose
Requires DOS, Win 95
Price $80

Grand Prix II, like its 1992 precursor World Circuit, is a simulation of Formula 1 automobile racing. It is also the hottest racing title ever developed for the PC.

Featuring sophisticated graphics that include light-shaded paint schemes, real Formula 1 cars and drivers, the smoke, flag-waving turn workers, detailed scenery and much, much more, it's a visual masterwork. But unlike its primary competition, Papyrus Design Group's IndyCar Racing II, GP II brings realistic racing to the masses with a variety of drivers' aids that help rookies through the rough going. Pros, on the other hand, can switch off all the assistance and enjoy the impressive driving model and brilliant artificial intelligence unencumbered. A pure joy for racers of any age and skill level.

Wing Commander IV
From Origin Systems
Requires DOS
Price $70

Is it a game? Is it a movie? It's a bit of both I guess, but one thing's for sure: this, yet another *Star Wars* based media vehicle, is undeniably entertaining. There's just one prerequisite: You've got to enjoy acting more than inter-acting.

Featuring Malcolm McDowell, *Star Wars* veteran Mark Hamill and an otherwise strong cast, the mostly mundane dialogue is delivered in not-quite-ready-for-Oscars fashion, but with a budget of $12 million, the action sequences and filming techniques more than make up for any shortcomings. In the end, WC IV succeeds because it takes computer gamers to lands where no game has gone before. There's a game in here too, and in the space-combat tradition of the Wing Commander series, it's pretty good. Enjoy the ride.

You Don't Know Jack Volume II
From Berkeley Systems (Win 3.1, Win 95)
Requires Windows 3.1/95 or Mac
Price $50

Volume II is the follow up to the original You Don't Know Jack, a game which debuted just a tad late for last year's holiday roundup.

If the original had arrived a bit earlier I would have told you about a product that plunks you down right in the middle of a manic multiplayer computerized game show complete with a sarcastic host. Incredible pacing, and a very successful mixture of pop culture and traditional trivia. I also would have said that it's funnier than Bob Dole in a Go-Go dancing cage and 100 percent totally addictive.

Volume II has more of the same, but with new questions, a Hall Of Fame, and "Celebrity College Calls" where people like Tim Allen, Dana Carvey, Susan Sarandon and yes, even Eric Estrada offer up stumpers in typically disturbed You Don't Know Jack fashion. A high intensity party game with enough information to keep even an academic happy.

Other Great Games from '96

- **Adventure**: Monty Python and The Quest for the Holy Grail (7th Level), Zork Nemesis (Activision)
- **Simulation**: AH-64D Longbow (helicopter sim from Jane's Combat Simulations), Su 27 Flanker (fighter jet sim from SSI). Potentially powerful and due out by Christmas: NASCAR 2 (Papyrus)
- **Sports**: LINKS LS (Access), NHL PowerPlay 96 (Virgin). Potentially powerful and due out by Christmas: FIFA Soccer 97 (EA Sports)

The controllers

Joystick—everyone's familiar with the term, yet a joystick is probably just one of several weapons gamers would love to have in their arsenal. For that matter, some gamers may never even touch a stick, opting instead for gamepads or wheels or yokes or... well, you name it, there's lots from which to choose.

Generally the choice of controller is dictated by gaming preferences. A joystick is a good all-purpose controller used mainly for fighter plane, space combat, racing and sports games.

Handheld gamepads are a better bet for sports games, a definite for 3D first person action and third-person adventure, strategy and puzzle games, and really quite ➤

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adaptable to any genre that doesn't require pinpoint accuracy (they're not built for flying or racing).

Yokes, while great for civilian flying simulations, are far too conservative and delicate for anything that involves guns and air combat. Wheel and pedal units, although seemingly designed for anything involving the automobile, in fact work best with strict racing simulations, and not so well with wild 'n' wacky arcade games, while throttles and weapons control systems are suited strictly to the fighter jet jockey.

So, without further adieu, let's check out the latest and greatest controllers from the year that was, sorted alphabetically.

F-16 Fighterstick, F-16 Combatstick, F-16 Flightstick
From CH Products
Prices: $69-$150

CH has been a world leader in control devices seemingly since the beginning of time. In 1996, the company added substantially to its line of joysticks with this trio of offerings: beefy controllers developed primarily for airplane and space combat games.

The F-16 Fighterstick is the most technologically advanced of the three, crammed with four four-way switches, three buttons, a trigger and a throttle, and is fully programmable on its own. The F-16 Combatstick offers 14 functions that are programmable only when used with the CH Pro Throttle; otherwise it's software dependent. The F-16 Flightstick is the least complex, and seeing that it doesn't have a viewing hat, it remains a mystery why anyone would choose this over the veteran CH Flightstick Pro—except that it looks cool, like a real F-16 stick.

Force FX
From CH Products
Price: $200

It hadn't been released at press time but expect the first physical manifestation of the ballyhooed force-feedback technology to hit store shelves before Christmas. It's going to be called the Force FX, and though it'll look like the CH F-16 Combatstick, it will transfer tactile sensations such as jolt, vector force, vibration, spring, button reflex, and buffeting back to the user.

So now, as you watch yourself in a head-on collision on screen, you'll be able to feel it too. Remember, games must be built specifically to support the Force FX, or it just won't do its thing.

Mark II Weapons Control System
From Thrustmaster
Price: $150

Built as a sidekick for the Thrustmaster Mark II Flight Control System, the Weapons

Continued on page **122**

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Top 10 Books

Continued from page **107**

Ahmed, an *Owl* editor (and occasional commentator for the Discovery Channel) and illustrated in a funky, kid-savvy style by Martha Newbigging. Though the book is a bit on the thin side at only 72 pages, it has plenty of information.

Like *Owl Magazine*, *CyberSurfer* has plenty of fun activities for kids. Puzzles, quizzes and games are sprinkled throughout the book, along with profiles of what other kids have done on the Net, like creating their own Web pages or chatting to new friends in different countries. All of this is designed to give kids a better sense of the Internet while injecting some fun and instilling an eagerness to participate.

Parents will appreciate many of the "street smarts" the book teaches kids who want to travel the Info highway. A section called Safety Net teaches kids how to avoid computer viruses, password basics, and to stay away from dubious people and picture sites on the Internet. There's also a kid friendly glossary provided for all of those often confusing Net terms.

Celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, *Owl Magazine* has become so successful because it knows its audience. *Cybersurfer* proves it. ❑

Science Puzzler

Continued from page **116**

also burn, boil or dissect objects, test the air or examine clues under a microscope.

If you appear stumped, Kathryn Wimshurst, Sleuth Extraordinaire, will offer tips to help you solve the mystery. Following the trail of wacky and off the wall clues is hard work, but a lot of fun is injected along the way. And, as a bonus, your teen can perform all types of interesting and unusual experiments without worrying about blowing up your house or the school.

The ability of the program to change when it is replayed is one of this title's strong points. This program has six different levels leading to multiple endings. According to the manufacturer, young scientists have over 600 lab experiments to perform, with hundreds of resources to investigate.

And there is a sequel, Science Sleuths 2, for when this disc has been fully mastered. It contains another 600 lab experiments, etc., to tickle more teen grey cells.

Parents wishing to help should perhaps solve a case first, as it is not as easy as you might imagine. This is one program that may actually give kids an advantage over parents.

Another caveat is to make sure that the person you want to use this program is really keen on the subject. To get the most from this disc, the user must be patient and persistent, since it can be frustrating to have to go back time and again through a number of steps to solve the mystery. Many players will be inclined to give up long before the pieces are put together in the right order. ❑

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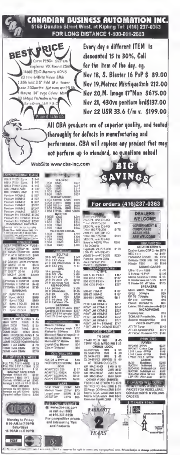

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Gifts for Gamers

Continued from page ***120***

Control Systems is the same sort of idea as the CH Throttle, except it's been around longer. Essentially a rounded black plastic ball built onto a shortened joystick handle, the unit sports a whole bunch of programmable buttons and switches that should effectively rid you of that annoying keyboard once and for all The pivoting handle/throttle has a tactile detente position for afterburners, and that's very nice for us pilots who've been caught speeding in the middle of a dogfight but software programming is pretty darn complex involving terms and technicalities beyond the scope of most reasonable humans

Pro Throttle
From CH Products
Price $150

Here's another way out for PC pilots or action gamers tired of grappling with keyboard keys in the heat of battle Actually, the term "throttle" is a bit of a misnomer because it does so much more

The CH Throttle with six buttons, one hat and a two-way switch stretched across the length of its handle will perform up to 20 programmable functions (including macros), and is fully functional with any joystick or flight yoke The pseudo-graphical front-end software guarantees quick and easy programming, and the throttle itself functions in a sliding rather than pivoting motion, which in action seems to provide better awareness

Sidewinder 3D Pro
From Microsoft
Price $100

This past year will be remembered as the year Microsoft got into gaming in a big way and its premier control device is the Sidewinder 3D Pro joystick. Looking dark and sinister like something straight out of a Batman movie, the Sidewinder features a fairly comfortable handle with palm support, four buttons and a hat and an aerodynamically designed semicircular base

The Sidewinder is quite innovative, sporting a very impressive swinging and "pivoting" handle that can be used for strafing in first person action games and as a rudder control in flight sims—otherwise it's quite solid in motion but with a noticeable centre "notch" Mounted on the base are four extra buttons useful only in the (nudge, nudge) Windows 95 operating system, and a sliding, not rotary, throttle that is pretty darn herky-jerky Simulation gamers should be wary of the digital feel of the analog mode wherein a small degree of physical movement translates to a ton of it onscreen

Sidewinder Game Pad
From Microsoft
Price $50

It may look more like a boomerang than a gamepad, but Microsoft's latest hardware endeavor is one ergonomically delightful product. You hold the unit with both hands, each grasping a side "handle" with index fingers extended to wrap around the two triggers growing from its underbelly With a total of eight action buttons (triggers included) a grooved directional pad, and a "Start" button that'll automatically re-start supported games the Sidewinder is a slick rig that should handle most any function your heart desires For advanced and customized gaming, the unit also comes with a macro function wherein a keystroke or series of keystrokes can be mapped into a single button press.

Spaceorb 360
From Spacetec IMC Corporation
Price $100

Last year Spacetec IMC came up with the Spaceball Avenger a controller targeted

specifically at first-person 3D action games. Resembling a gamepad more than anything else the Avenger's big claim to fame was a tennis ball sized implement attached to the unit's left side that, when pushed or pulled turned or twisted let you concoct some wicked little moves that just weren't possible with traditional controllers But it was a pricey innovation at nearly $200, and that darn PowerSensor Ball was difficult to manipulate

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This year Spacetec is back with the SpaceOrb 360 an adaptation of the Avenger. With a more comfortable grip a smaller "ball" that responds to the lightest of touches six (mappable) buttons and a reduced price tag it's a definite step ahead But before you rush out and get one it should be noted that the SpaceOrb works to its full potential only on games built to support it (or with patches for those games) Also the unit gobbles up one full COM port upon installation

Virtual Vehicle
From Interactive I/O
Price US$1 295

Resembling a converted towing machine more than anything else the racing-only Virtual Vehicle is an amazing all-metal contraption that sits you in actual racing posture hands gripping a real racing wheel and legs stretched out to meet two perfectly angled pedals Your rear will be snuggled into an imitation racing seat and ahead you'll peer into the monitor (not included) that sits atop the built-in stand Like the family Mazda, it just feels right

The price is undeniably high at US$1 295 but a desktop combination of the wheel and pedal components is available for half that For more information, contact the manufacturer.

Contact: Interactive I/O Tel: 714 921-0804
E-mail Interactivela com

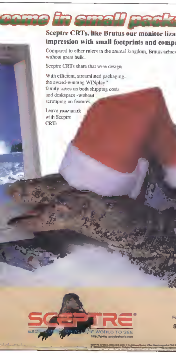
WingmanWarrior
From Logitech
Price: $130

From Logitech comes the Wingman Warrior, a dual handled Wingman offshoot that aids with independent movement and weapon targeting—essential in first-person action games like Doom and the kazillions of Doom lookalikes Essentially it's a Wingman joystick, and can be used as such but with a sleek little left hand appendage that sports a 360-degree variable speed "SpinControl" knob right up top Connect the Warrior to your serial (mouse) port grip the stick with your right hand and spin knob with your left and you can turn and dodge and do the Texas Two Step if you like, all the time remaining focused on the cantankerous critters.

Oldies but goodies

There are a number of superb controllers that warrant very serious consideration even if they aren't of 1996 vintage Here's the best listed by category

- **Basic Joysticks** (non programmable sticks with four or less buttons) CH Products Flightstick and Flightstick Pro Logitech's Wingman and Wingman Extreme
- **Advanced Joysticks** (programmable sticks with a vast array of buttons) Advanced Gravis' Firebird, Suncom Technologies' F 15E Talon Thrustmaster's Mark II Flight Control System
- **Gamepads.** Advanced Gravis GrIP Game System (six button programmable), Suncom's SFX (eight button, programmable)
- **Flight Yokes** CH Products Virtual Pilot and Virtual Pilot Pro Suncom Technologies' G-Force.
- **Steering Wheel/Pedals** Extreme Competition Controls' Competition Driving System (available only from the manufacturer at 612 824 6733 Check their Web site at http //www ourworld compuserve com/homepages/extreme for more details) ❑



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The cheque list

TCP's annual survey of Canadian payroll software

BY JOAN HORNAL

There are many new products in the review this year, mostly in the Windows and Macintosh environments. There are still many good DOS products on the market in both the small and large company categories.

More systems are including human resources information or additional modules for human resources management purposes. All programs surveyed support multiple pay period types and all provinces and territories of Canada

The software features continue to improve on the Windows platform for example, user interfaces are more consistent with the Windows interface and most of the products have become more flexible Most of the programs offer laser printed cheques and T4 forms and support for Revenue Canada's SBN

Some of the payroll software companies have home pages or Internet addresses on the Internet which have been included where available

New crop challenges old favorites

The Canadian Payroll System for Windows and Macintosh still one of my favorite payroll programs has stiff competition this year from Accpac for Windows for the best product offering the most advanced features and value in the high-end Canadian payroll category Accpac for Windows has all the same high-end features and flexibility and is easier to use

MYOB with Canadian Payroll is by far the best value in integrated accounting software as well as being the lowest cost Windows product. Avanti and Grand Master II are packed with high-end features in the DOS category and PayMate offers the best value for your dollar with its high end features, ease of use and user friendliness

All of the programs reviewed in this survey except Checkmark, were installed and tested using Windows 95 on a Pentium 100 MHz system with 16 MB RAM and a color monitor and all performed well Many of the programs will run very well on slower systems in a DOS or Windows 3 1 environment

DOS systems

AccPac Plus Canadian Payroll

Version 6 0H
From Accpac International
OS compatibility OS/2 DOS 3 1 Win 3.x, Win95
Network compatibility Novell
Minimum hardware PC with 512K RAM & hard drive
List price $1,200
Updates/maintenance $300/year
Support $300/5 prepaid resolutions (other options available)

This is a good choice for those using the other Accpac Plus modules Earnings and deductions can be calculated from user-defined formulae Recurring time sheets containing standard earnings and deductions provide for fast payroll processing A general ledger account can be associated with each earning and deduction code and earnings codes can be assigned to specific T4 boxes Time sheet entries can be imported from non-Accpac Plus programs Employees can be assigned to general ledger departments for departmental costing or time and payroll burden can be posted to a job-for job costing

You can choose either to interface with the Accpac Plus job-cost module or select payroll-cost reporting, which will include job-costing information on the time sheet and cost-centre reports

A major problem with Accpac Plus payroll is that it does not retain the pay-detail history only year-to-date data is retained This comprehensive and flexible program is a good choice for businesses requiring payroll job-cost data for posting to an Accpac Plus general ledger.

Contact Accpac 5936 Airport Rd Mississauga ON L4V 1W5 Tel: 905-678-6700 Fax 905-678-6734
Web site http://www.cai.com

Aspen Avanti

Version 6 1

From Aspen Avanti Inc
OS compatibility DOS Windows
Network compatibility: Novell VMS Unix
Minimum hardware 386 PC Hard Drive 4 MB RAM
Price $4 490 (single user) $9395 (50 network user) $2 495 (human resources)
Updates/maintenance $700 (single) $1 030 (network) $500 (HR)
Support: Included

Aspen's entry is a complete payroll system suitable for large businesses in a network environment and businesses downsizing from mainframe applications

The program installs automatically in Windows but performs as a DOS program It integrates with many third-party general ledger systems and with the Avanti Human Resource Information System

Avanti payroll is extremely flexible—employees can be assigned to pay groups, departments, Workers Compensation Board (WCB) groups vacation groups and locations Complex deductions and benefits can be defined with a spreadsheet type formula to facilitate calculations within the program Tax can be calculated using the bonus method You can establish up to 9,999 locations or divisions, each with individual general ledger earnings and benefit costing Rate grids are available for groups of employees assigned to the same wage scale Earnings can be entered from time cards imported or generated by the system

The program comes with a complete set of standard reports, or custom-report formats can be set up using the report writer. The payroll run can be cancelled corrected and reprocessed even after cheques have been printed. Avanti Payroll has full job-costing capabilities and large general-ledger account numbers Data can be integrated with the Avanti Human Resource Management system and General Ledger and exported to third-party accounting systems You can file submissions to CEC and T4s to Revenue Canada on diskette. This is a very powerful payroll system for complex payrolls

Contact. Aspen Avanti Inc 1030-10655 Southport Rd SW Calgary AB T2W 4Y1 Tel 403-225-2366 Fax: 403-278-2010 Help line 403-225-2366.

DacEasy for DOS
Version 6
From DacEasy Canada Inc
OS compatibility Dos 3 1>
Network compatibility n/a
Minimum hardware PC 640K RAM and hard drive
Price $195
Updates/maintenance. $99 95
Support n/a

DacEasy's DOS product is a good value and a good program for those whose ➤

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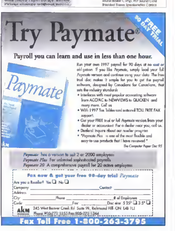

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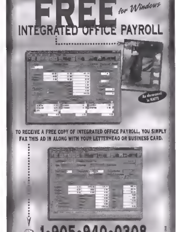

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computer hardware can not run Windows It has pull-down menus and is well organized and easy to use Non routine operations such as bonus payments and advances may cause some difficulties but can be handled. Good help is at your fingertips

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Fax 905-940-0308 Help line 416-782-8324

EasyPay
Version 8.000 Multicompany
From: EasyPay Software Company
OS compatibility: DOS 3.1 or greater
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Updates/maintenance: $195/year
Support: included with updates

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I like the employee pay history feature that allows you to display a paycheque record and then access the detailed pay record Reporting is very comprehensive and flexible The program interfaces with many general ledger products. The manual is well laid out and very easy to use and online help is context sensitive.

Contact: EasyPay 1733 Heritage Way Oakville ON L6M 3A2 Tel 905-825-8020 Fax 905-825-9660
Help line, 905-825-8020

GrandMaster II
Version 3.0
From: Canpay Computer Software Ltd.
OS compatibility: DOS OS/2
Network compatibility: n/a
Minimum hardware: 386 4 MB extended/15 MB disk
Price: $1 495 $195(Direct Deposit)
Updates/maintenance: $395/year
Support: 1 year free

GrandMaster II is a good choice for medium to large companies and government bodies considering downsizing from mainframe systems, companies with union contracts and non-profit organizations using large account numbers.

Its multi-user feature allows up to 10 users to enter payroll information at one time It provides 50 user-definable earnings and 50 deductions and benefits, which are linked Calculation formulae can be assigned to both earnings and deductions.

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GrandMaster II provides a user-definable, matrix type table of wage rates, such as you would find in a union agreement. The table cell coordinates can be entered in the employee's file. Global rate changes are entered to the table and all employees' files are updated. There are quick-entry features for entering time cards with multiple rates of pay, dates and account numbers.

A sample company is available for learning and context-sensitive help is online to assist in the setup and use of the software. The program provides an extensive cost breakdown by department and extremely flexible cost reporting. The product's special features include the ability to associate each employee's earnings and deductions with multiple general ledger accounts and departments. GrandMaster II provides an interface with most general-ledger applications through its import and export feature. A report generator is included in the program to enhance the flexibility of reporting.

Custom reports are available for specific industries, such as the special report to provincial school offices. Electronic filing of T4s and T4As is now available. The company offers customization of many payroll features, on request, for specialized industries and non profit organizations.

Contact: Canpay, 895A Century St., Winnipeg MB R3H 0M3. Tel 204 987-8520 Fax 204 772-6706
Help line 800-665 5129 E-mail sales@canpay.com
Web site http://www.canpay.com

Great Plains Canadian Payroll
Version 8.2
From: Great Plains Software
OS compatibility: DOS 3.3, OS/2, Macintosh
Network compatibility: XENIX, Unix, Mac,Novell NT
Minimum hardware: 386 PC or MAC SE, 640K RAM, hard drive
Price: $890 (single user), $1 990 (multi user)
Updates/maintenance: $275-$675/year
Support: Various plans

Here is a powerful, flexible payroll program for both Macintosh and DOS. Its most notable feature is the unlimited number of earnings, deductions and taxable benefits, which can be calculated and tracked.

I liked the setup of "Employee pay type authorization" where the codes are predefined and you just have to select them. Recurring transactions can be stored, eliminating re-entry of data each payroll. A second level of on-screen help is available and can be configured by the user. Setup is complex, but the getting started manual provides detailed checklists with the proper task order for installation and setup. Reporting is very flexible and complete.

The program retains and prints an employee's entire pay history for the year. This report and other audit trails are excellent. Great Plains is excellent for job-cost purposes as it tracks both the hours and the amount by job, expenses the company portion of the expenses to the job and performs automatic overhead calculations. Great Plains Canadian Payroll will interface with Great Plains general ledger, accounts receivable and job cost.

Contact: Great Plains, 1701 SW 38th St., Fargo ND 58103. Tel 701 281-0550 Fax 701 282-4826
E-mail info@gps.com Web site http://www.gps.com

Help Canadian Payroll
Version 5.06/V5.07
From: Help Software Services Ltd
OS compatibility: DOS 2.0 or greater
Network compatibility: n/a
Minimum hardware: PC, 256K RAM, hard drive
Price: $349.95
Updates/maintenance: $80 for first 18 months, $119/year after
Support: Unlimited and free

This moderately priced product provides a lot of features. You can manually update the statutory-deduction tables or use the tax table updates. You can use a forward averaging or bonus method in addition to the regular method to calculate tax deductions.

Help can import time cards from other programs. Other features include the easy entry and accumulation of daily time cards, easy modification of statutory deduction calculations, simple customization of the cheque advice and good facilities for locating and correcting errors. It can record costs by department, by code and by groups. Help provides general-ledger interface files for many general accounting programs and provides a concise month-end report for manual general ledger postings.

You can now make global changes to TD1 amounts, rates of pay and deductions. New features this year include accumulation of hours worked for the ROE in anticipation of UIC reform. Status Indian employees are fully supported for T4 requirements. T4s can be printed on a laser printer. The manual is very easy to follow and fun to use as it takes a humorous approach to the setup of a company's payroll. New this year is Labels w/Help, a label program that works with your Help employee files.

Contact: Help Software Services, 226 Fulford-Ganges Rd., Saltspring Island, B.C. V8K 2K7. Tel 800-663-4712 Fax 250-537 1870 Help line 800-663-4712

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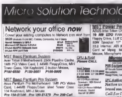
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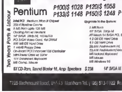
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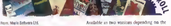

From: Maple Software Ltd.
OS compatibility: DOS/OS2/Windows 3.1/95/NT
Network compatibility: n/a
Minimum hardware: PC 256 K RAM, hard drive
Price: $59 (10 or fewer employees) $150 (11-50 employees) $285 (51-400 employees)
Updates/maintenance $100/year
Support: Free

This inexpensive, easy-to-use program has many features of more expensive programs. It can be run from almost any operating system.

You are guided through the setup process and not allowed to enter any time data until the setup is complete and correct. A time sheet calculator is available to enter and total employee time sheets using daily starting and ending times. There is an "unposting" feature available to correct errors found after posting of the payroll and a mass-change feature is also available to change amounts. The program will also track apprenticeship hours.

Earnings, benefits and deductions are easy to setup. Ten fields of personnel information can be entered to an extra employee screen. Pay history retention is good and the reporting is flexible. The manual is online and help is context sensitive. If you are not using the latest in hardware this is a good program for you.

Contact: Maple Software, 519-120 George Henry Blvd. North York ON M2J 1G2 Tel: 416-491 3922 Help line 416-491 3922. E-mail: maple@orion.org
Web site: http://www.orion.org/maple/obpay.html

Paycheq Controller V
Version: 3.6
From: Aston Microsystems
OS compatibility: DOS 3.3>
Network compatibility: Xenix, Unix
Minimum hardware: PC 640K RAM, hard disk
Price: $995 (single user DOS)
Updates/maintenance: $325/year
Support: Free

Here is a complex flexible DOS-based payroll product designed to interface with Real World, Accpac Plus and Timberline accounting and job-cost systems.

The screens and keystrokes are similar to those of Real World software, thus different from other programs. The menus and data entry screens are not user friendly. Screen prompts and help have been improved since the last review but are still poor.

The manual is complete and easy to use and a good tutorial is provided with the system. Earnings, benefits and deductions are unlimited and totally user definable and as a result the program is very powerful but the setup is hard work. The program produces all the reports a business would require as well as a direct-deposit interface.

Contact: Aston Microsystems, 2148 Sherwood Cres. Abbotsford BC V2T 1B8 Tel: 800-667 3368
Fax: 250-852-7376

PayMate
Version: 2.0 V 5.8 PLUS V 5.8
From: AK Microsystems
OS compatibility: DOS 3.31>
Network compatibility:
Minimum hardware: PC 640K RAM, hard drive
Price: $249 (under 20 employees) $483 (over 20)
Updates/maintenance: $120/year
Support: $195/year for over 20 employees

Available in two versions depending on the number of employees, PayMate is a program that grows with you. There is a simple upgrade path available.

PayMate is compatible with most popular accounting packages. A calculator and notepad are available in all versions. PayMate is extremely easy to set up and to use. Context-sensitive help is at your fingertips. If you make an incorrect step when setting up PayMate, a box pops up to guide you in the correct procedure.

A feature called Tips and Techniques has been added to the general menu to guide you through setup and error-recovery procedures. This product will batch time cards for quick setup and review of payroll entries. The pay is calculated as the time sheet is entered and can be reviewed on the screen for errors.

Reporting is very comprehensive with good pay history retention. The program maintains personnel information, such as benefit plans, due dates for salary reviews and increments, and education and skills information. Selected employees with fluctuating salaries can elect to have their pay calculated using the cumulative averaging tax calculation method allowed by Revenue Canada. In the setup for job costing, payroll costs can be made to include benefit costs. Overhead costs can also be added. A direct deposit feature and a time-clock interface are available with PayMate Plus. PayMate Plus has excellent reporting features and is a flexible and easy-to-use product.

PowerPay
Version: 2.32 (1994)
From: PowerSoft Systems Ltd.
OS compatibility: DOS 2.0>
Network compatibility: n/a
Minimum Hardware: PC 512K RAM, hard drive
Price: $88 (single company) $299 (multiple)
Updates/maintenance: $55/year (single)
$160/year (multiple)
Support: No charge

This inexpensive, easy-to-use payroll program would be suitable for a single company. A multiple-company version is also available. The names of four taxable benefits and six deductions can be defined in addition to those assigned by the program. Payrolls can be calculated individually, by employee or by pay-period groups. There is good contact-sensitive help.

There is no provision for entering manual cheques or after-the-fact pay. Adjustments to the payroll may be made to the opening entries or by deleting, then reentering a pay record. PowerPay does not provide an ROE report. It does, however, calculate the Workers Compensation liability for each employee covered. The program prints T4s, but does not produce a T4-summary report.

Contact: PowerSoft Systems, 103-14888 104th Ave Surrey BC V3R 1M4 Tel: 250 582 7488 (Surrey) or 416-886-1698 (Toronto). Fax: 250-582 7388 (Surrey) or 416-886-2650 (Toronto)

Something Simple
Version: May 96
From: Something Simple Inc
OS compatibility: DOS 3.1 >
Network compatibility: NETBIOS compatible
Minimum hardware: PC 640K RAM

Price. $188 (single user) $699 (multi user)
New to the program this year Something Simple is an integrated accounting system with payroll It was easy to setup It has all the basic payroll features including job costing I liked the fact that the remittance cheques can be sent to the payables module for processing Reporting is complete except for the ability to print T4 summary and ROE forms I found the data-entry screens outdated and confusing If you select this program for its other modules, the payroll will do the job for you

Contact: Something Simple 3 9833 44th Ave
Edmonton, AB T6E 5E3 Tel 403-438-7289
Fax 403-434-4404 Help line 800-565-6294

TimeFrame
Version 2 0
From Time Frame Software Inc
OS compatibility DOS
Network compatibility n/a
Minimum Hardware PC 380K RAM hard drive
Price $295 (Ver 2) $395 (Ver 3)
Updates/maintenance: $150/year (Ver 2)
$220/year (Ver 3)
Support Included with updates
This program is new to the survey this year but it is not a new product Versions 2 and 3 are menu-driven DOS products that will run on any PC The programs have been designed for a job-costing and union reporting environment In addition to the features in Version 2 Version 3 has pop-up windows, allows definition of custom-earning codes, has a direct deposit interface and better reporting for a union workplace A working demo of Version 2 can be downloaded from the Internet

Contact Time Frame Software 353 Mississaga St. W
Orillia, ON L3V 3C4 Tel 705-329-4077
Fax 705-329-2091 Help line 705-329-4077
E-mail timefrme@bconnex.net
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Vigilant Payroll and Personnel Manager
Version V 7 01
From Vigilant Business Software Inc
OS compatibility DOS 3 1>
Network compatibility n/a
Minimum Hardware PC 320K RAM
Price $296
Updates/maintenance $195/year
Support: Included
This product is another that's being reviewed for the first time this year. It is a DOS program that can be used alone or as a module of other Vigilant Business Software systems

The program is a batch-entry system where you record time cards and process a payroll run. It provides for many types of earnings and deductions and is good for union environments There is no provision for manual cheques or after-the fact pay but adjustments are easy and it does have a single or quick-cheque feature It provides all the standard reports, reporting is very flexible and payroll history retention is good.

Contact. Vigilant Business Software 300-181 Eglinton Ave E Toronto ON M4P 1J4
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Help line 800-668-2200

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Version V 2 0
From Accpac International
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Network compatibility Windows NT/Novell
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Recommended hardware Pentium PC 16 MB RAM
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Updates/maintenance $356/year
Support $330/4 prepaid resolutions other options available
New from Accpac International this complex and flexible product has unlimited earnings and deductions and the ability to retain payroll history for 99 years Earnings benefits and deductions are user definable and the setup is so flexible you can easily calculate the most complex amount. You can select up to three general ledger account segments for cost-centre reporting Any combination of segments can be assigned to an employee's earnings and deductions These cost centres can be redefined on the fly for complete flexibility

The system distributes statutory deductions proportionately to the cost centres in which the employee's taxable wages were earned The batch time card entry system uses piece-rate and pay schedule tables to calculate overtime and shift differentials for union workplaces Time cards can be reused from period to period or imported from other systems As well as seven user-defined custom fields, the system maintains extensive personnel information and an area for free-form notes.

Operators have complete control of the timing and amount of consolidation of postings Macros are available to automate repetitive procedures such as calculating payroll printing cheques and printing standard pay period end reports. Cheques and forms can be modified and custom reports can be prepared using the built in Caret report writer The Crystal Info report writer incorporated in the system manager further enhances the product s reporting flexibility This exciting new software is a good choice for medium to large businesses and non profit organizations

Contact Accpac International 5935 Airport Rd
Mississauga, ON L4V 1W5 Tel 905-678 6700
Fax 905-678-6734 Web site http://www.cai.com

AccPac Simply Accounting For Windows
Version 4
From Accpac
OS Windows 3 1/95
Network compatibility None
Minimum hardware PC 486 4 MB RAM hard drive
Price $225
Updates/maintenance $50 update
Support. $100/year
This second entry from AccPac includes payroll as part of its totally integrated software package for small businesses The payroll is very easy to set up and use It handles manual and computer cheques and after-the-fact payroll. Earnings and deductions types are limited but the program calculates workers compensation and prints T4s ➤

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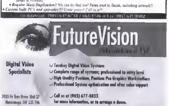
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BASICS	Version	Ver 6.0H	V 2.0	V 4	Ver 6.1	Ver. April 1996	—	V 6	V 1.2
HELP	Online help	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Tutorial or sample company	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Telephone support available	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Sample reports available	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
FEATURES	Multiple companies	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	General ledger departments	■	■	□	■	■	■	■	■
	Job costing	■	■	■	■	■	■	□	□
	Multi-user/network	□/■ Novell	■	□	■	■	□	■	□
	Multi UIC rates per company	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Password protection	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Interfaces with general ledger	■ Accpac Plus	■	Directly integrated	■	■ Dynamics	■ MYOB	■ DacEasy	■ DacEasy
	Number of items per employee								
	Earnings types	30 Earnings	Unlimited	3	500	8/Unlimited	7 Hourly and 12 user	5	5
	Taxable benefits	[illegible]	Unlimited	4	500	2/Unlimited	definable income	5	5
	Non-statutory deductions	per employee	Unlimited	5	500	Unlimited	10	5	10
	Automatic calculation formulae								
	for earnings	■	■	□	■	■	■	■	■
	for taxable benefits	■	■	□	■	■	■	■	■
	for non-statutory deductions	■	■	□	■	■	■	■	■
	for GST on taxable benefits	□	■	■	■	■	□	□	□
	Supports pay, benefits & taxes	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Manual cheques	■	■	■	■	■	■	□	■
	After the fact pay	■	■	■	■	■	■	□	■
	Vacation advances	■	■	■	■	■	□	□	■
	Calculates accruals	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Banks hours	□	■	□	■	■	■	□	■
	Calculates workers' compensation	□	■	■	■	■	■	□	□
	Automatic indexing	■	■	□	□	■	□	□	■
	Retains payroll history for prior years	□	■	1 Prior year	■	■	□	■	■
	Allows extra tax deduction	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Customized cheques and stubs	■	■	■	■	■	■	□	■
	User update to tax tables	□	□	□	■	□	■	□	□
	Direct deposit interface	□	3rd party	□	■	Additional Module	□	□	□
	Electronic filing of T4 & T4A	□	□	□	■	□	□	□	□
	Calculates pension adj. for T4's	□	■	□	■	■	□	□	□
	User defined fields	□	■ 7	□	□	■ 5	□	■ 3	■
PRINTING AND REPORTS	Prints cheques for								
	Employees	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Receiver General for Canada	□	□	■ as AP Vendor	■	□	□	□	□
	Other deductions	□	□	■ as AP Vendor	■	□	□	□	□
	Prints laser cheques	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	T4 & T4A	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	T4 summary form	□	■	□	■	■	■	□	□
	Record of employment form	■	■	□	■	■	■	■	■
	Releve 1	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Cheque register	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Payroll journal or register	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Employee's detail pay history	□	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Month end report for G/L	■	■	□	■	■	■	■	■
	Employee's year to date report	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Employee profile	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	T4 summary report	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Insurable earnings report	■	■	■	■	■	■	□	□
	Statutory deduction report	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Other deductions report	■	■	■	■	■	■	□	□
	Job cost/department report	■	■	■	■	■	■	□	□
	Direct deposit report	□	■	□	■	■	□	□	□
	Cheque reconciliation report	□	■	■	■	■	□	□	■
	Statistics Canada report	□	□	□	■	□	□	□	□
PERFORMANCE	Auto install of software	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Ease of setup	Complex but easy	Easy	Extremely easy	Formulas complex	Extremely easy	Very simple	Easy	Easy
	Ease of use	Easy	Very easy	Extremely easy	Easy	Easy	Very easy	Easy	Easy
	Ease of adjustment	Easy	Easy	Extremely easy	Easy	Easy	Very easy	Very easy	Very easy
	Programmed backup & restore	□	□	□	□	□	■	■	■
	Menu appearance	Clear, logical org	Icons	Buttons	Clear	Buttons/pull down menu	Macintosh	DOS Pull Down	Buttons
	Data-entry screen appearance	Good	Forms and tables	Forms and tables	Clear	Forms and tables	Macintosh	Clear, some clutter	Forms
	Personnel management information	Very limited	Some	None	Human resources module	Some	None	Some	Good, user defined
	General flexibility	Good	Excellent	None	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Good	[illegible]
	Reporting flexibility	Good	Excellent	Some	Excellent	Excellent	Some	None	None

Legend ■ = Yes; □ = No

EASYPAY	GRAND MASTER II PAYROLL SYSTEM	GREAT PLAINS CANADIAN PAYROLL	HRLP	KIS PAYROLL FOR WINDOWS	MTM INTEGRATED OFFICE PAYROLL FOR WINDOWS	MYOB ACCOUNTING	PAY-CALC	PAYCHEQ CONTROLLER V
V 6.000 Multicompany	V 8.0	V 8.2	V 6.06/6.07	V3.2 June 96	V 1.0	V 6/7	V 6.0	V 1.6
■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
■	■	■	□	■	■	■	■	■
■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	□
■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■ Additional cost	■
■	■	■	■	■	■	□	■	■
Limited	Additional module	■	■	□	□	■	□	■
■	■	■	□/■	□	□	□	□	■
□	■	■	□	■	■	□	■	■
■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
■ Many	■	■	■ Many	■	■ Various	Directly Integrated	□	■
40	50	Unlimited	10	24 inc benefits	[illegible]	Unlimited	9	Unlimited
40	50	Unlimited	8	[illegible]	[illegible]	Unlimited	9 Benefits & Deductions	Unlimited
40	50	Unlimited	10	[illegible]	10	Unlimited		Unlimited
■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
□	■	□	□	□	□	■	■	■
■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
■	■	■	■	[illegible]	■	■	□	■
■	■	■	■	[illegible]	■	■	□	■
■	■	■	■	■	■	□	■	■
■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
■	■	■	□	[illegible]	■	□	■	■
□	■	■	□	□	□	□	■	■
■	■	■	□	□	■	□	■	■
■	■	■ Summary, 1year	■ cheque	■	■	□	■	■
■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
□	□	□	■	□	□	□	□	□
■	■	Additional module	□	□	■	□	□	■
□	■	—	□	□	□	□	□	□
□	■	□	□	□	□	□	□	□
□	□	□	□	□	■	□	□	□
■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
□	□	□	■	□	□	■ as AP vendor	□	□
□	□	□	■	□	□	■ as AP vendor	□	□
■	■	■	■	■	■	■	□	■
■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
□	□	■	■	■	□	□	□	□
■	■	■	■	■	■	□	□	■
■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
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■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
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■	■	■	■	■	□	■	■	■
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■	■	■	■	□	□	■	□	■
■	■	□	□	□	■	□	□	■
■	■	□	□	□	■	■	■	■
□	■	□	□	□	□	□	□	□
■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Easy	Complex but easy	Moderately difficult	■	Easy	Easy	Fairly Easy/ 7 has Wizard	Easy	Difficult
Easy	Easy	Easy	Easy	Easy	Easy	Fairly easy	Easy	Easy
Easy	Easy	Easy	Easy	Easy	Very easy	Very easy	Easy	Easy
■	■	□	■	■	■	■	■	□
Good	Pull down	Clear	Good	Pull Down	Buttons	Buttons	Clear but outdated	Clear but outdated
Clear	Good	Clear	Good	Forms	Forms	Forms and tables	Clear but outdated	Clear but outdated
None	Available as add on	None	None	Some	Good, user defined	Good	Good	None
Good	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Good	Good	Excellent	Good	Excellent
Good	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Some	None	Excellent	None	Some

CANADIAN PAYROLL SOFTWARE

	Product Name	PAYMATE	POWERPAY	QUICKBOOKS FOR WINDOWS	SOMETHING SIMPLE ACCOUNTING	TIME FRAME DOS PAYROLL	VIGILANT PAYROLL & PERSONNEL MANAGER
BASICS	Version	20 V 5.9 PLUS V 5.4	V 2.38 (1994)	V 4.5	May-96	V 2.8	V 7.01
HELP	Online help	■	■	■	■	■	Limited
	Tutorial or sample company	■	□	■	■	■	■
	Telephone support available	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Sample reports available	■	□	■	■	■	■
FEATURES	Multiple companies	■/■	□/■	■	■	■	■
	General ledger departments	■/■	■	□	□	■	■
	Job costing	□/■	□	■	■	■	■
	Multiuser/network	□	□	□	■	□	■
	Multi UIC rates per company	■/■	□	■	■	□	□
	Password protection	■	□	■	■	■	■
	Interfaces with general ledger	■ Many	■	Directly integrated	Totally integrated	□	■
	Number of items per employee:						
	Earnings types	12-Aug	9	Unlimited	4	8	Multiple
	Taxable benefits	9-Feb	6	Unlimited	2	14	20
	Non-statutory deductions	12-Oct	8	Unlimited	3	18	21
	Automatic calculation formulas:						
	for earnings	■	[illegible]	□	□	■	■
	for taxable benefits	■/■	□	□	□	□	■
	for non-statutory and [illegible]	■/■	□	□	□	□	■
	for GST on taxable benefits	□	■	□	□	□	□
	[illegible]	—	—	■	■	—	■
	Manual cheques	■	□	■	■	■	□
	After the fact pay	■	□	■	□	■	□
	Tracks advances	■	■	□	■	□	□
	Calculates accruals	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Banks hours	□	□	■	□	□	■
	Calculates workers' compensation	□	■	■	■	□	□
	Automatic indexing	■	□	□	□	□	■
	Retains payroll history for prior years	■	■	■	□	□	■
	Allows extra tax deduction	■	■	■	□	■	■
	Customized cheques and advices	■/■	□	■	□	■	■
	Use update to tax tables	□	□	□	□	□	■
	Direct deposit interface	□/■	□	□	□	□	■
	Electronic filing of T4 & T4A	■	□	□	□	□	□
	Calculates pension adj. for T4's	□	□	□	□	□	□
	User defined fields	□	□	■?	□	□	□
PRINTING AND REPORTS	Prints cheques for:						
	Employees	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Receiver General for Canada	□	□	■ as AP vendor	■ as AP vendor	□	□
	Other deductions	□	□	■ as AP vendor	■ as AP vendor	□	□
	Prints laser cheques	■	□	■	■	■	■
	T4's T4A	■	■	■	■	■	■
	T4 summary form	■	□	□	□	□	□
	Record of employment form	□/■	□	□	□	■	■
	Releve 1	■	□	■	■	■	■
	Cheque register	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Payroll journal or register	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Employee's detail pay history	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Month end report for G/L	■	■	□	■	■	■
	Employee's year to date report	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Employee profile	■	■	■	■	■	■
	T4 Summary report	■	□	■	■	■	■
	Insurable earnings report	■	□	■	□	■	■
	Statutory deduction report	■	■	■	□	■	■
	Other deductions report	■	□	■	□	□	■
	Job cost/department report	Dept/Job cost	□	■	■	■	■
	Direct deposit report	□/■	□	□	□	■	■
	Cheque reconciliation report	■	□	■	■	□	□
	Statistics Canada report	□	□	□	□	□	□
PERFORMANCE	Auto install of software	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Ease of setup	Extremely easy	Easy	Easy	Easy	Easy	Not friendly
	Ease of use	Extremely easy	Easy	Easy	Confusing	Easy	Easy
	Ease of adjustment	Easy	Not easy	Easy	Easy	Easy	Easy
	Programmed backup & restore	■	□	■	□	□	■
	Menu appearance	Excellent /pull down	Clear	Buttons	Confusing	Outdated	Clear
	Data-entry screen appearance	Very clear	OK	Forms and tables	Confusing	Outdated	Clear
	Personnel management information	Extensive and good	None	■ user defined	None	□	Some
	General flexibility	Good	None	Good	None	Some	Some
	Reporting flexibility	Some	None	Good	None	None	Good

Legend ■ = Yes; □ = No

Chart legend

The accompanying chart represents an attempt to compare costs, services, features and options for the programs. Where information was not available the cell contains a dash. Some features are described here for clarification.

Online help: product provides user with additional information during data entry if a key or combination of keys are pressed.
Tutorial or sample company: training material is either on disc or in a training section in the manual.
Telephone support available: user can call the maker—usually at the user's expense—for assistance. Many companies now provide a fax number for written requests for help and support over the Internet.
Multiple companies: If "Y," payroll can be processed for more than one company.
Job costing: will record units of time and amounts to a job and provide job-cost reports. More complex products also calculate and expense benefits and other overhead for the job.
Multi-UIC rates per company: can calculate more than one UIC rate per company; more than one Revenue Canada number is required.
Interfaces with general ledger: most payrolls provide a general-ledger report or a general ledger interface text file that contains journal entries summarized by account number, department number and amounts. Some products reviewed are integrated directly with a complete accounting system.
Number of items per employee: number of earnings, benefits and non-statutory deductions available per company or employee.
Automatic-calculation formulas: user-definable formulae for the calculation of earnings such as vacation accruals, commissions or piece work and non-statutory deductions, which are calculated on selected earnings or groups of earnings or other accounts.
Manual cheques: can enter manual cheques prepared between payroll runs.
Tracks advances and calculates accruals: maintains a record of pay advances or accruals such as holiday pay until deducted or paid out.
Banks hours: can bank hours or units for sick pay or time off.
Calculates Workers' Compensation: will calculate the amount due to Workers' Compensation.
Automatic indexing: will automatically index employees' TD1 claims by annual cost of living adjustment.
Direct-deposit interface: can send a file directly to bank's direct-deposit system.
Printing and reports: some will not print directly on all government forms. As an alternative they print a report that can be transcribed onto the government form.
Detailed pay-history report: lists each earning and deduction for each employee by pay period and totals to the year-to-date level.
Year-to-date report: shows the year-to-date amount of all earnings, benefits and deductions for each employee.
Employee profile: shows employee name, address, birth date, start date, etc.
Direct deposit report: report for the bank showing the amount of the deposit and the employee's bank account number.
Auto install of software: If "Y," there is a program on the program disc that creates the sub-directories and copies the program files onto the hard disk.
Ease of setup: is preconfigured or user can quickly configure pay frequencies and the earnings and deductions.
Ease of use: process of entering time sheets and calculating payroll is simple and straightforward and lookup tables are available for the selection of data to enter.
Menu appearance: Good DOS products have easy to use, easy-to-read pull-down menus; Windows products offer function buttons or icons. Color is also a consideration.
Data-entry screen appearance: uncluttered screens, lookup menus accessible at entry lines and clear keystroke instructions on the entry screen.
Personnel-management information: availability of fields for tracking vacation and sick days, family information, education and other relevant data. A free-form screen or user definable fields are sometimes available.

— *Joan Hornal*

T4As and Releve1s Simple job costing is also available. This program is a good solution for small service or construction businesses

Contact: See previous AccPac item for info.

The Canadian Payroll System for Windows

Version April 1996
From Geran Software Solutions Inc.
OS Windows
Network compatibility Macintosh/Novell/NT
Price. $2 500 (unlimited paycodes) $500 (multi bank dir deposit) $250 (additional companies)
Updates/maintenance $500/year
Support: $240/5 prepaid calls (other plans available)

This package was developed to integrate seamlessly with Great Plains Dynamics accounting software and other third-party products or as a standalone system that can be configured to export to any general ledger

It takes full advantage of the Windows environment with its menu bars, tool bars, buttons, and lookup features Setup is extremely easy Most of the earning or deduction codes you require have been preconfigured for you to simply click with the mouse and enter the amounts Complex benefit and deduction formulae are easily configured, and samples are available in the training manual

Individual general-ledger accounts and departments can be assigned to every pay code. Every payroll entry can be assigned to a job for costing purposes. Extensive human-resource management fields are provided, no need to add a human resource module to your system Data entry is in a batch mode Batches can be automatically generated and overtime can be automatically calculated Flags can be set to repeat field contents and facilitate quick entry

One nice feature is the ability to combine batches prepared by different operators Standard and user-customized reports are available at all stages of the payroll cycle If you are committed to Windows and have the hardware to run a high-end full-featured Windows accounting system this payroll product would be a good choice

Contact Geran Software Solutions, #203 Building 15
25 Airport Rd Edmonton AB T5G 0W6
Tel 403 451 5758 Fax 403-453 2843
Help line 800-818 9556

Checkmark Canadian Payroll

Version n/a
From. BusinessCare
OS. Macintosh 4.2 >
Network compatibility None
Minimum hardware Macintosh 1 MB RAM, single drive or hard drive
Price $195
Updates/maintenance $129/year
Support: Included

This can be used as a standalone or with MYOB for the Macintosh The payroll is very simple to setup and to use It provides for seven hourly earnings and 12 definable income categories There are 16 user-definable deductions. The program retains hourly time-sheet data from one pay period to the next to speed up data entry It has a department distribution feature that distributes wage amounts to departments or jobs and calculates and distributes the related employer's portion There is also a feature to import or export employee information to or from a text file Reporting capability is good.

Contact. BusinessCare 56 Centre St. Thornhill ON L3T 3N3 Tel 905-731-0744 Fax. 905-731-5861

DacEasy Payroll for Windows

Version V 1 2
From DacEasy Canada Inc
OS. Windows 3 1 Win95
Network compatibility None
Minimum hardware PC 386 4 MB RAM hard drive
Recommended hardware PC 486 8 MB RAM FD
Price $259.95
Updates/maintenance: $99 95/year
Support $95/year

This DacEasy product is easy to install. The menus and icons provide easy access to all functions. Online help is both indexed and context sensitive Error correction is extremely easy and calculated deductions can be manually overwritten.

The cheque information can be brought to the screen and edited. Payroll cheques can be reconciled using DacEasy Accounting Personnel-management features include vacation review and promotion tracking This is a reasonably priced, easy to setup and use payroll system for Windows good for most small- to medium-sized business that do not require job-costing features.

Contact. DacEasy 201-3075 14th Ave Markham, ON L3R 0G9 Tel 905-940 3314 Fax. 905-940-0308
Help line 905 940-3314 (ext 501)

KIS Payroll for Windows

Version 3 2 June 96
OS Windows 3 0 >
Network compatibility: None
Minimum Hardware PC 386 4 MB RAM, hard drive
Pric. $495
Updates/maintenance $99/year
Support: Included with updates

Setup is very easy and fast on this Windows product Help is available through the Help function on the control menu and through a feature called the Adviser. The Adviser guides the user through the setup procedures and the steps necessary for a payroll run. It also advises the user starting the program of procedures that should be completed before the next payroll run

Earnings and deductions are provided for you to simply click the mouse on the selected options Time cards and additional earnings are entered quickly and easily to dialogue boxes that retain the data from the previous payroll run as a default to speed up data entry A payroll may be recalculated amounts can be overridden and cheques can be printed as often as necessary for the payroll to be correct Reporting flexibility is good—you select reports and audit trails for viewing on the screen or printing by simply clicking the mouse The program also has good import and export capabilities.

Contact KIS Information Systems 101-2510 Government St. Penticton BC V2A 4W6
Tel 800-665-4226 Fax: 250-490-8317
Help line 250-490-8117

MTW Integrated Office Payroll

Version 1 0

➤

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PENTIUM 133 MHZ	$1170		$41 78
PENTIUM 150 MHZ	$1290		$46 18
PENTIUM 166 MHZ	$1390	–	$49 10
PENTIUM 200 MHZ	$1800	–	$62 94

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OS: Windows 3.1/95
Minimum hardware: PC 386 4 MB RAM, hard drive
Recommended Hardware: PC 486 8 MB RAM
Price: $495
Updates/maintenance: $195/year
Support: information n/a

This is an enhanced version of DacEasy Payroll for Windows. Its added features include integration with Accpac Plus, MTW Integrated Office Accounting for Windows and QuickBooks, and a direct-deposit interface. The version of the product I reviewed had these features disabled so I am unable to comment on them.

Contact: MTW Solutions Online 201-3075 14th Ave
Markham, ON L3R 0G9 Tel: 905-940-3314
Fax: 905-940-0308 Help line: 905-940-3314 (ext 501)

MYOB Accounting with Payroll

Version: 6/7
From: Best Ware
OS: Macintosh/Windows 3.1
Minimum hardware: Macintosh Plus 4 MB RAM; PC 386 4 MB RAM
Recommended hardware: CD ROM
Price: $169
Updates/maintenance: Tax only $39.95/year
Support: included with maintenance fee of $179 ($2.95/min.)

MYOB's entry is a fully integrated software program for small- and medium-sized businesses. It provides for an unlimited number of amazingly flexible earnings and deductions.

Because of this flexibility, a good understanding of the payroll process when setting it up is required. This is readily achieved by viewing and then following the instructions in the getting started video. Version 7 comes with an easy setup Wizard. Reports and forms are customizable. It ships with extensive help on CD-ROM. This is an excellent program for businesses and non profit organizations requiring an integrated and very flexible payroll solution.

Contact: Best Ware 1000-145 King St. W. Toronto ON M5H 3X6 Tel: 416 360-2360 Fax: 416 360-2927
Web site: http://www.myob.com

QuickBooks for Windows

Version: 4.5
OS: Windows 3.1
Network compatibility: None
Minimum hardware: PC 386 4 MB RAM
Recommended hardware: 8 MB RAM
Price: $139.95 ($40 rebate for Quicken or QB user)
Updates/maintenance: Approx. $59.95/year
Support: 30 days free/$25 per inc. (other plans avail.)

QuickBooks for Windows is a fully integrated accounting solution for small- to medium-sized businesses and professional practices. The payroll component offers unlimited earnings, benefits and deductions. It is easy to setup and use. Instructions pop up in a box as you are using a function. Reporting is very complete and history retention is good.

Like most of the newer products, it has incorporated a personnel management function with the payroll. If you require a low-cost complete accounting solution in one box, you will find this payroll system as good as many standalone products. ❑

Contact: Intuit, 4200-2025 Sheppard Ave. E
Willowdale, ON M2J 1V6. Tel: 416-756-3434
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Prepared by Joan Hornal, BSc, CGA, of Joan V Hornal & Co. Inc., a public accounting practice serving small businesses in Vancouver by providing computer consulting, accounting, auditing and tax services.

CarCop aims to end auto theft

BY GEOF WHEELWRIGHT

State of the art home security technology is going for a drive. Using a combination of telecommunications, satellite and computer technology, American electronic security giant ADT Limited has developed a system designed not only to counter car theft, but also as a way to alert authorities during a "car jacking" or other "road rage" crime.

The system known as CarCop is being test marketed by ADT in the Miami and Atlanta metropolitan areas in conjunction with Atlanta-based Mobile Security Communications.

Simply put the system combines ADT's existing 24-hour central monitoring capabilities with cellular communications technology and a global positioning satellite (GPS) system to automatically indicate not only when an ADT customer s car has been broken into but where the car is.

When the CarCop system is installed in a vehicle, it can be activated and deactivated using a cellular phone handset (which comes with the system), or using a keyless entry control If CarCop detects a security problem (because the correct codes have not been entered) when the vehicle is parked or in use, the system automatically transmits an alarm signal directly to an ADT security centre giving information about the nature of the emergency and details of the vehicle's exact location.

At the centre, ADT says its staff can pinpoint the exact location of the vehicle on a digital map and, by using the cellular link to the vehicle, request the deactivation code or, in the case of a carjacking, listen in to the vehicle to monitor the situation This discreet cellular link would be initiated via a call that would be automatically answered without a ring on the in-car phone if the correct deactivation code was not received when the vehicle was started.

The company says that by knowing the type of emergency or assistance required, it can call the appropriate emergency services or roadside assistance and tell them exactly where to find the vehicle.

ADT says it plans to fully implement the service across the United States some time in 1997 The company also says it is studying plans to offer the service in the United Kingdom and the rest of Europe.

There is no news yet on when or if ADT plans to provide the service in Canada

In the U.S the monthly fee for CarCop will start at less than US$20 ADT expects to be monitoring approximately 100,000 CarCop systems by the end of 1997 ❑

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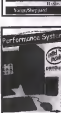
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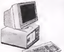

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Deck the halls with sounds of Holly

Canadian songbird Holly Cole and her band have recorded the sights and sounds of a homecoming concert in Montreal and made them available on an new enhanced CD.

It Happened One Night is "enhanced" with video footage of four songs from a June 1995 concert, two music videos shown in the disc's "movie theatre," biographies and photos of the band members, and a frequently asked questions section in which Cole discusses touring, the moods of her various albums and the fast-food preferences of her dog Rhoda.

The eight songs on the CD-ROM are live versions of songs from three of her previous audio-CD releases, and include *Que Sera Sera*, *Train Song* and one of her first hits, the ethereal *Calling You*.

The video and audio quality are excellent. One of the few criticisms of the disc is the speed at which the text screen advances in the band-bio section. Unless you are a speed reader and true multitasker (Cole talks about each band member's relationship to their instruments and the music while you try to concentrate on the rapidly advancing text), you'll have to read these write-ups more than once—and from the beginning each time.

Although the CD's enhanced elements probably won't stand up to repeated viewing, the audio will especially for fans of Cole's spare, jazz-influenced style. *It Happened One Night* has a suggested price of $16.99.

And good news for those in need of more Cole comfort: this CD ROM comes out just in time for her Canadian tour, which begins Dec. 11 in Calgary, with dates in Banff, St. Albert, Vancouver, Victoria, Toronto, Montreal and winds up in Ottawa on Dec. 31. —*Megan Johnston*

Contact: Alert Music
Tel: 416-364-4200
Holly Cole, Web site
http://hollycole.com

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Healing Herbs:

A CD compendium on the medicinal properties of plants

BY MARTIN P. WATERMAN

The Healing Herbs
From: Lifestyle Software
Price: US$49 95

With the increasing interest in natural healing there have been volumes of material written on the healing properties of plants. And now that information is available on CD-ROM

The Healing Herbs disc is distributed by Florida based Lifestyle Software Group but actually hails from Italy's Sacis, one of the largest software publishers in Europe

At a time when you can go to big discount retailers and fish bargain priced CDs out of a bin for under $10, this CD-ROM carries a somewhat steep price of US$49 95

So does it offer premium value for its premium price? In my opinion, the answer is yes.

Healing Herbs contains information on the medicinal uses of more than 400 familiar herbs In comparison with a book that I have on the same subject, also called *Healing Herbs*, from health and lifestyle publisher Rodales, this disc featured twice the number of plants

Some of the material on the CD-ROM surprised me, because such information is seldom mentioned in North American texts For instance, I never expected to find plants such as grapes (leaves), kidney beans (dried pods), asparagus (dried roots), and celery (roots and flowers) listed as medicinal The disc even discusses marijuana

This additional information sets Healthy Herbs apart from its less expensive and not nearly as thorough counter parts

The color photographs are some of the best I have seen on a CD-ROM and the music is quite enjoyable The introduction and some of the supporting information is on the lean side but the descriptions of the plants are quite thorough

You cannot cut and past from the program but you can save the herb descriptions as .txt files You can also print the descriptions directly from the program

Healing Herbs also serves as a quick reference medicine chest For instance, I went to the search window and entered indigestion and was taken to the lemon balm screen I learned that this herb has antispasmodic, anti-flatulent and mild sedative properties and is often used for treating gastrointestinal disorders

I conducted searches for other afflictions and was given five herbs to treat burns 12 herbs to treat swelling three for itching, 14 for fever and nine for insomnia. You may not be able to find the actual herbs as quickly but if you are a gardener, keep this program in mind at seed-ordering time ❑

Healing Herbs

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IRMAC (Information Resource Management Association of Canada) offers meetings on issues concerning Information Resource Planning Data Warehouse CASE etc http://www io org/ irmac or via irmac@io org

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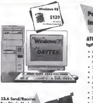

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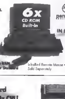

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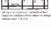

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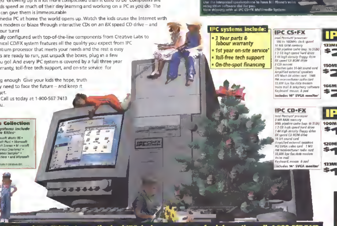

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